

UNDERSTANDING SUBSISTENCE USE AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN
COMMUNITIES SURROUNDING DENALI NATIONAL PARK
AND PRESERVE

by

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ABSTRACT

Effective management of subsistence use in Alaska includes sustaining wildlife species and preserving the cultural activities that link communities to their environments. However, managing subsistence use is complex and requires a comprehensive understanding of subsistence users' identities, cultural traditions, and motivations. The presentation describes the research program funded by the NPS Subsistence Advisory Council that is intended to improve management of subsistence activities on federally managed lands. Specifically, the research team uses in-depth semistructured interviews, through a phenomenological approach, to explore the identity formation of subsistence users in designated subsistence communities surrounding Denali National Park and Preserve. The results increase our understanding of subsistence use and identity formation in an NPS setting and aim to improve the quality of communication between managers and subsistence users. Recommendations for continued research are described.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Alaska exhibits a complicated history of land and wildlife use in the form of subsistence activities by residents that includes the hunting of wild game and gathering of plant resources in and around public lands. In Alaska, among Native and Euro-American individuals seeking lifestyles that exist in tandem with cultural or personal connections to the surrounding ecosystems, activities relating to subsistence have been protected and encouraged by local communities and land management agencies (Norris, 2002). Reliance upon fish and game for personal use, for trade, and as supplements in a mixed-cash economy has been vitally important to local subsistence communities and individuals for decades, if not hundreds of years (Norris, 2002). While subsistence users are largely Alaskan Native with historical and cultural ties to the land (Nelson, Mautner & Bane, 1982), Euro-American individuals are also dependent upon resources for customary and traditional use in rural areas (Norris, 2002). The dependence upon subsistence activities in regards to hunting of game and collecting wild plants and other materials for food or craft making is especially significant in and around Denali National Park and Preserve (DENA).

Subsistence activities are important to individuals living within rural Alaska and contribute to the cultural, social, and environmental sustainability of local fish and game

populations (Nelson et al., 1982). In Alaska, subsistence activities involve game hunting for ungulate species, such as moose, deer, and caribou; setting trap lines for fur animals such as wolves, mink, martin, and lynx are also common. For this study, individuals who partake in subsistence related activities can live on road systems while others live in areas only accessible by boat or plane (Norris, 2002). Cantwell is an example of this anomaly as a recognized subsistence community living on a road system. Cantwell was designated as a subsistence community prior to the building of the Parks Highway and maintained its designation after the road had been constructed. Therefore, reliance on the environment and on others within a community is often an important facet of the culture for all three communities. This study sought to develop a better understanding of how identity is formed by individuals living a subsistence lifestyle within Alaska.

State and federal understandings of subsistence characterize the current body of knowledge that focuses on defining individuals for the purpose of management. Subsistence is defined and managed by federal agencies and is used to identify individuals and communities who express traditional resource dependence on the land. The federally initiated Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) authorized subsistence use by local rural residents located in and near specific National parks within Alaska. The communities of Cantwell, Nikolai, and Lake Minchumina were allowed continued hunting and fishing access to DENA under ANILCA for individuals living within the traditional boundaries of the community. Additionally, individuals living outside of the old community boundary are not considered part of the resident zone community and are therefore not federally recognized as subsistence users. Additionally, ANILCA is used to identify traditional subsistence activities and formulate a definition

that includes federally understood characteristics of subsistence identity. Section 803 of ANILCA states that

As used in this Act, the term “subsistence uses” means the customary and traditional uses by rural Alaska residents of wild renewable resources for direct personal or family consumption as food, shelter, fuel, clothing, tools, or transportation; for the making and selling of handicraft articles out of nonedible byproducts of fish and wildlife resources taken for personal or family consumption; for barter, or sharing for personal or family consumption; and for customary trade. (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, n.d.)

Subsistence is defined by federal agencies to differentiate resource dependent communities from individuals without traditional dependence on the land. ANILCA policy strives to preserve cultural activities and protect fish and game resources for future generations of Alaskans. Research focusing on subsistence activities on federal lands includes scientific estimates relating to game harvest, economics of subsistence, and cultural understandings of traditional use communities (Nelson et al., 1982; Wolfe, 1991). However, while current literature from scientific and anthropological fields focuses on how subsistence activities are carried out, very little is known regarding *why* these activities are important to the identity of the resource user through a social psychological lens of analysis.

Literature focusing on identity and the development of the self in relation to others in a social and environmental context is extensive in the field of social psychology. Current understanding of the identity literature includes analysis of the ways in which individuals construct identity in relation to wildlife, ecological principles, and their community. This analysis focuses on the complex and ever changing understanding of self (Opatow & Clayton, 2003). Identity construction is a complex daily process of reconfiguring, reconstructing, and continually reevaluating one’s sense of self in relation

to others. Identity is a way for an individual to structure information about themselves to make sense of who they are (Clayton & Myers, 2009). An individual can hold multiple identities that vary in their importance in relation to the environment and the situation (Clayton & Myers, 2009). The natural environment shapes an individual's identity while individuals themselves project personal meaning onto the environment (Clayton & Myers, 2009). In order to explore the connections that subsistence users have with others and the natural environment, identity construction can be better understood through research focusing on the meaning-making of these particular individuals.

Erikson (1959) recognized that the construction of identity is made through connections with others. He theorized that identity is continually reworked through the information gained from individuals within their social sphere. Information is continually altered and interpreted from social norms, culture, and belief systems within social worlds. In contrast, deep ecology theorists, such as Naess (1989), examined the ways in which individuals form their identity through their understanding of how self is incorporated into the larger ecological system. Naess found that there is need for individuals to connect with nonhuman creatures and to feel a sense of belongingness with the natural world. Ultimately, his findings suggest that this fostering human-wildlife connections leads to a stronger, more developed sense of self (Naess, 1989).

Other research has also shown that connections to nature, particularly wildlife, affect the way in which an individual constructs their identity (Myers & Russell, 2003). Individuals reliant on resource use have a greater propensity for valuing wildlife as a commodity, such as the harvest of game for food—yet research has found that individuals not reliant on local resources develop a relationship with the environment based upon

feelings of care and friendship. In this sense, animals are anthropomorphized and seen as having human characteristics and therefore of the same value as human populations (Manfredo, 2008). The ways in which individuals perceive the animal world develops their value system, which ultimately affects the ways in which they perceive themselves in relation to wildlife as a subsistence user (Manfredo, 2008). This self-in-relation concept is characteristic of both human social situations and identity construction relating to the natural environment. This in turn impacts the values, attitudes, and beliefs held by subsistence users living in rural environments (Manfredo, 2008). Identity characteristics are therefore components of each resource user and provide insight into why subsistence is important to these individuals within an Alaskan context.

ANILCA's broad definition represents a set of activities that may or may not describe the actual activity level and type of subsistence use. Subsistence use varies by individual as well as type of community and location (Nelson et al., 1982). Because of the variance in subsistence use, understanding how connections are created between the user and the local environment, the activities conducted, and the level of importance of the community is best explained by subsistence users themselves. Gathering data from local hunters, fishers, and gatherers, helps park managers understand this term "subsistence" as it is defined by the individuals through their perceptions of themselves, others in a social environment, the natural environment, and attachment to place.

Exploring identity and the salient themes among subsistence users in rural communities surrounding DENA develops our understanding of how individuals connect, value, and are motivated by their environments and other resource users to participate in subsistence practices. This type of focus, due to the complexities of understanding and

exploring human behavior, required a methodology that is capable of navigating the richness and intricacy of identity. Conducting research that employs qualitative methods was essential in this situation. Therefore, the focus of this study was to explore the differences among individuals and their motivations, and seek common themes relating to the construction of identity within an Alaskan context. The research question that guided this study was what are the salient themes pertaining to identity construction among subsistence users living in rural communities surrounding Denali National Park and Preserve?

Study Purpose

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to develop a broader and more thorough understanding of how identity is constructed by partaking in subsistence activities in rural Alaskan communities. Understanding what motivates subsistence, the values made through meaning, and beliefs that are constructed through culture as well as the individual drove the questions for this study.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study included the following:

1. How is identity constructed through subsistence activities?
2. How do subsistence activities affect one's connection to place, community, and family?
3. How does attachment to place affect human and nonhuman relationships within a subsistence context?

Qualitative methodology was used to develop these research questions into semistructured interviews with subsistence users living in the communities of Nikolai, Cantwell, and Lake Minchumina. Participants were selected using key informants through tribal councils and community subsistence boards. In turn, snowball sampling was initiated through the key informants to pinpoint possible individuals willing to participate in the study. Two methods were used to collect the data: photo elicitation was attempted to help participants pinpoint meaning most salient to them and act as conversation starters during the interview, and semistructured interview questions were used to explore subsistence meaning-making. Individuals were prompted to share characteristics of subsistence that held personal meaning to themselves within the community through the use of these semistructured research questions.

The three communities selected for this study are characterized by their federal designation as customary and traditional subsistence use communities by DENA. Only one of the communities, the town of Cantwell, is located on a road system. Two of the communities, Lake Minchumina and Nikolai, are accessible only by airplane, boat, or snowmobile during the winter months. A fourth community, the Village of Telida, was not visited as a part of this project due to the difficulty in accessing the area and a lack of sample size (at the time of the study, only one person was currently living in the community). The ecosystem of the study area is highly variable and includes alpine and glacier regions in the Alaska Range to wet and dry tundra areas with portions of forested environments made up primarily of species of spruce, birch, and alder. Given the cultural and economic connection these communities have with the land and its resources, the researcher believed the area provided opportunity to study the significance of identity

construction among Native and Euro-American individuals living in these subsistence communities. By gathering information from the many different perceptions of subsistence users, the researcher found that this project provided the opportunity to broaden state and federal definitions and understandings of subsistence use and provide insight on local management issues and policies.

Definitions

Definitions used for this study are defined below.

- **Subsistence:** The act of harvesting fish, game, and plant materials for consumptive use.
- **DENA:** Denali National Park and Preserve, a federally managed park in central Alaska that manages and maintains hunting access for Lake Minchumina, Nikolai, and Cantwell communities.
- **Place Attachment:** The complex bond between people and place (Altman & Low, 1992).
- **Self-Determination Theory (SDT):** a theory that postulates human motivations are contingent on innate psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000).
- **Identity:** A framework for organizing information about a person (Clayton & Myers, 2009).
- **Athabascan:** A Northern-Alaska Native culture group (Nelson et al., 1983).

Delimitations

The delimitations set for the project included interviews conducted with individuals living in three federally recognized subsistence communities of Nikolai, Cantwell, and Lake Minchumina surrounding DENA. Individuals were invited to participate through several methods that varied by community. Introductions were conducted in Lake Minchumina through a community meeting. Due to the large population of Cantwell, 200 letters of introduction were mailed to residents; for Nikolai VHF announcements were made as well as door-to-door introduction. For both Cantwell and Nikolai, introductions were also made over the phone through premade contacts. Only adults 18 years and older were included in the data collection process.

Out of four communities surrounding DENA, three were used as sample sites due to their diverse histories, locations, and affiliation with the park. This study limited its coverage of the communities to individuals having lived in the community 1 or more years. The main purpose of the study was to explore how subsistence users construct their identity based upon subsistence activities. The researcher tried to collect a large number of interviews to develop data saturation among themes. This study considered all individuals associated with a community above the age of 18 and sought to gather interviews from individuals of all ages, genders, and activity level relating to subsistence. Each participant was asked to participate in photo elicitation and shown stock photographs as well as asked exploratory questions that were modified throughout the interview at the discretion of the researcher. This study focused only on individuals living within the federally recognized subsistence communities of Nikolai, Lake Minchumina, and Cantwell during the summer of 2013.

Limitations

Limitations to the research included possible bias on part of the researcher due to familiarity of the area based upon previous experience working in DENA. Additionally, a personal interest in resource use and subsistence based upon past reliance on natural resources by the researcher was noted and controlled during the data collection process. Timing of the project was an issue during the summer months due to conflicting schedules associated with participants being out of town or working long hours. Lastly, forming relationships with participants during short site visits over one summer proved to be difficult as an outsider entering ethnically and culturally diverse communities. As an outsider, gaining the trust of community members can take time, and short visits to the communities were, in most cases, not long enough to form bonds with residents.

Another limitation to the project included eliciting the help of individuals in regards to photo elicitation. When asked if they were willing to participate in taking photos prior to the interview, individuals expressed disinterest or a lack of time to complete the activity. Again, due to the often busy schedules of participants due to work and harvest duties, taking time from their day to collect photographs was not possible. Additionally, stock photographs were often taken far too literally by participants. When presented with a photograph, participants often reverted to asking the researcher questions or focusing too intently on the photograph and not applying their own experience to the visual prompt. In general, basic exploratory questions regarding subsistence lifestyles and living in the area were received well by participants. In general, Lake Minchumina, Cantwell, and Nikolai are familiar with summer researchers, and general questions by outsiders are more familiar to the communities.

Additional challenges I faced as a researcher included power dichotomies—real or perceived—that related to my affiliation with federal management agencies. Additionally, cultural issues involving my positionality as a white, Euro-American interacting with individuals of varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds was also noted. As a researcher, it is not required that I come from similar backgrounds as my participants. However, I was “engaged, thoughtful, and forthright regarding tensions that can surface...where issues of race and culture are concerned” (Milner, 2007, p. 388). Additionally, I continued to develop a deeper understanding of racial and cultural knowledge of my participants as well as myself during the research process (Milner, 2007). By being mindful of my own cultural positionality and those of my participants, I helped negate the misconceptions that resulted as a product of my Euro-American background. Despite the issues arising from differences in culture and ethnic backgrounds, having an awareness of possible ethnic self-perceptions based on cultural differences were valuable in navigating misconceptions and developing better communication with participants throughout the research process.

Additionally, my affiliation with the National Park Service (NPS) had both the potential to either open or close doors depending on how I was perceived by individuals within the community. This resulted in a much stronger obstacle than I had originally planned. Individuals were often wary over the phone and in person when seeking contact, especially in Cantwell where individuals have a more abundant history of negative interaction with the park and state management. In many cases individuals struggled with understanding (or possibly even believing) that I was a research student from a University and not an NPS researcher. Interviews were sometimes guarded and in certain

cases individuals felt the need to reveal their negative feelings regarding NPS management and management in general. I faced several challenges collecting data while in the field as I sought to interact with individuals on a personal level who viewed me negatively due to affiliation with a management agency. This experience and awareness of being “Othered” has strengthened my passion to not only build connections with communities on a personal level, but to also help foster trust between NPS management and the communities themselves by allowing resource users the opportunity to develop their own voice regarding what they find meaningful about subsistence.

In summary, navigating the complex and in-depth themes relating to family, spirituality, need for autonomy and connectedness, the changes to identity over time, and how an individual can be beholden to more than one identity at a time were core to this study. Rural and urban communities in Alaska are subject to policies and management that has an effect on their way of life (Norris, 2002). Making sense of identity construction in Alaskan communities provides researchers and resource managers with additional insight into future management implications and opens the door to increased understanding and discussion between stakeholders.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to provide the reader with a general overview of identity theories in the fields of social and environmental psychology. General identity theories relating to the self-concept in a social context are extensive. Theories relating to identity construction in relation to place and local environments are fairly new and can be found in much of the environmental literature. Therefore, Chapter 2 is divided into sections to help readers navigate the complex and in-depth research regarding how individual identity is formed in everyday life. I will begin with a broad understanding of identity as a self-concept as understood from the field of social psychology. Additionally, general human motivations and needs-focused theories will be discussed. Place identity will then be discussed regarding how an individual constructs their identity based upon the relationships created in a social community as well as those of the natural ecosystem.

Place identity is further explored through the phenomenon of place attachment where an individual's connection to a geographical setting affects the values, beliefs, and attitudes that in turn form their identity. The topic of identity then focuses on economy and reveals how rural life has a great influence on subsistence, therefore impacting

identity construction of individuals within the study. The last few sections will focus on connections between the subsistence user and community and family life before ending with a section on how the spirituality of Native and Euro-American individuals is an important component of their identity.

Identity

Identity can be defined simply as “what comes to mind when one thinks of oneself” (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2011, p. 69). In a broad and more complicated sense, identity is created from cognitive structures that enable individuals to understand their attitudes, goals, and sense of worth (Flick, 1998). Niesser (1976) also noted that identity is constructed from the values, beliefs, and attitudes created through cognitive categorizations of the human mind. Therefore, identity is constructed from characteristics and traits, societal roles, and individual relationships as well as inclusion within a group (Oyserman et al., 2011). These elements of identity are both personal and socially recognized and give insight into how identity is both a mirror of ourselves in relation to others and an understanding of ourselves in relation to the nonhuman world. Oyserman et al. (2011) also examined two other forms of identity: (1) role identities, where there is a recognized membership with another person, for example an individual is not a parent without a child who recognizes their role, and (2) personal identity where traits or characteristics of the self are expressed separately from social and role identities. Therefore, identities are socially displayed and constructed by the individual through how others perceive themselves and are perceived through interactions conducted in a social context.

Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge, and Scabini (2006) examined additional motivators for identity construction that involve both individual and social interactions with a group. Their research compared four studies that tested the influence of continuity, self-esteem, distinctiveness, belonging, meaning, and efficacy on the identity of individual as well as group participants. Vignoles et al. (2006) found that individuals seek to maintain or intensify these feelings of connectedness to define both group and individual identity where “motives for self-esteem...and meaning are most directly relevant to processes of identity definition” (p. 329). Therefore, individuals form their identity based upon responses from others in a social context that supports positive feelings of the self. For example, an individual will seek relationships with others who are supportive of their sense of self, such as a runner will seek community with other individuals who are runners themselves and will respect their interests and abilities. While self-esteem has been considered to be the prime motivator for identity (Hoyle, Kernis, Leary, & Baldwin, 1999; Sedikides & Gregg, 2003), research conducted by Vignoles et al. (2006) analyzed the complicated process of human psychology where self-esteem is one of the more important elements affecting the identity construction of the individual.

Identity and Place

The nonhuman environment is formative in the construction of identity by the individual through conscious and subconscious effects. Proshansky (1978) theorized a concept of place-identity where the self is formed based on aspects of the surrounding environment. While there are many factors relating to an individual's definition of self—

such as gender, occupation, religion, etc.—Proshansky focused on the dimension of self that

define[d] the individual's personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, goals, and behavioral tendencies and skills relevant to [their] environment. (Proshansky, 1978, p. 155)

If an individual understands their sense of self in relation to roles in work-related environments, connection to religious institutions, and family occupations, Proshansky (1978) theorized that one's local environment was also formative in constructing identity through the unique socialization of a specific physical world, such as rural versus urban, warm climates versus colder climates, etc. In turn, the particular environment in which the individual is situated has the propensity to change over time, thus having an effect on the continuity of an individual's identity where their "psychological structure...is both enduring and changing" (Proshansky, 1978, p. 156). Therefore, as the environment of the individual is continuously changing, the individual's identity will be reworked as their sense of self is challenged and reworked to fit the new experiences.

Research conducted by Cheng, Kruger, and Daniels (2003) analyzed the way in which place-based constructions not only influence individual action, but also collective action through shared meanings and expectations of a particular community or group. Cheng et al. (2003) mentioned that "not only do places affect how individuals look out upon the world (e.g., categorization or classification of places), they influence how they look on themselves. How one understands, evaluates, and acts in a geographic setting directly reflects one's self-identity" (p. 93). Place therefore affects an individual's sense of self-concept, or self-identification, as well as the way in which they make sense of the world around them. The symbolic meanings of individuals and of those within the

community are influenced by geographical location. In essence, place is a complicated social construction that is uniquely defined and created by its inhabitants (Cheng et al., 2003).

Symbolism associated with place is further created by norms of a social group. Using subsistence living as an example, the formulation of identity from individual to community is realized by the symbiotic nature of the relationship. When an individual cares for the needs of those in the community, the community in turn develops the identity of the hunter as provider. The importance of prestige has been noted in hunting communities when a community acknowledges the skills of a hunter (Okada, 2010). Individuals who are shown prestige, which signifies the value a community places on an individual, are more likely to give back to a community in the future. The concept of dual reciprocity is seen in many indigenous communities where “those who [gave] were always formally acknowledged, and good hunters received much local prestige from their participation as providers of traditional subsistence foods in these events” (Dombrowski, 2007, p. 218). In Alaska, the hunter contributes meat in the form of moose, caribou, or fish to social gatherings, such as potlatches or special ceremonies. The hunter is in turn acknowledged and thanked at the events by the community. Through this acknowledgement the identity of a hunter is validated through the act of subsisting and ultimately giving once successful in the attainment of game meat. Therefore, Community and social norms in rural settings mold environmental understanding and individual’s place within a natural setting (Dombrowski, 2007).

Diehm (2007) further analyzed how and why people identify with the natural world. Specifically, he analyzed the concept of identification in the realm of deep

ecology theory where identification-as-belonging and identification-as-kinship with nature were significant elements to understanding relational phenomena with the environment. Diehm (2007) identifies deep ecology principles that refer “to a particular sense of *belonging to* or *community with* the other-than-human world” (Diehm, 2007, p. 3). In this sense, humans are a part of a nonhuman social world and seek identity with creatures and processes outside of the human community. Identity is then personally constructed and based on relationships made with nature. Individuals are seen as intimately connected to the more-than-human world, to realize that we are members of natural or ecological communities that are constitutive of who we are...to identify with the natural world in this way is to recognize that we are a part of nature, and that nature is a part of ourselves (Diehm, 2007, p. 4).

In this context, self is constructed through personal perceptions and interactions with nature and not necessarily dependent upon social influences from human communities. This sense of belonging, of having an intimate connection with the natural environment, displays an element of kinship that is strong enough to be an “inalienable” facet of the individual and even the community itself (Snyder, Williams, & Peterson, 2003). Hunters in Alaska express an affinity towards the natural world that reveals their identification with the natural world aside from identification from that of the social community (Diem, 2007). Understanding their role as a part of the greater ecosystem can be an important facet of their need for autonomy in a natural setting.

Another important contribution to identity theory was instigated by Deci and Ryan (2002) who theorized that an individuals’ psychological behavior was based upon their need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, or what can be called Self-

Determination Theory (SDT). The three elements of SDT reveal (1) an individual's need to feel competent in an environment or within a particular social group (2) an individual's need to feel autonomous (in that they are acting under their own volition), and (3) that they are a part of a broader social or nonhuman system. SDT can be applied to subsistence users who find a need to relate to both a human and a nonhuman environment. This theory has the potential to open up broader understanding of subsistence identity and the nuances associated with the needs of Denali communities.

Attachment to Place

The term “place attachment” is used to describe two constructs: (1) the complex phenomenon of bonding between places and people and (2) the dependence (either psychological or resource related) that individuals' have on an environment (Altman & Low, 1992; Cheng et al., 2003). Consistent themes within place attachment include “affect, emotion, and feeling [as being] central to the concept,” which reveals the highly physiological effects that can occur (Altman & Low, 1992, p. 4). Altman and Low (1992) found that in addition to the many overlapping elements of affect, emotion, and feeling that describe the salient themes relating to place attachment, the phenomenon also contributes to “individual, group, and cultural self-definition and integrity” where individuals were dependent upon the surrounding environment to construct a positive sense of self (Altman & Low, 1992, p. 4). Therefore, implicit within these relationships between people and place are the powerful emotions that affect the way that an individual values, make sense of, and interact with the environment. Place is not merely geographical space where the individual resides, but also a landscape imbued with deep

meaning (Ballinger & Manning, 1998; Cheng et al., 2003). The meanings associated with place can be complex, and “encompass instrumental or utilitarian values as well as intangible values such as belonging, attachment, beauty, and spirituality” (Cheng et al., 2003, p. 89). The meanings behind place are not static and are continuously reconstructed through social norms and processes, from culture to culture, and individual to individual (Cheng et al., 2003). These key elements that make up place reveal how complex meaning making is when explored in the context of an individual’s relationship with the surrounding ecosystem and others living within the local community.

Place understanding draws from two avenues of theory regarding geographical location and meaning within the social and environmental sphere. Brandenburg and Carol (1995) pointed out that some see place as an individual construct. The environment then becomes a “projection of human consciousness” (Ehrlich, 1987, p. 24). Environmental psychology supports the contemporary theory and “views the individual as embedded in the environment and as actively defining and giving shape to it” (Williams & Patterson, 1995, p. 509). On the other hand, Brandenburg and Carol (1995) noted that classical theorist see the environment as the great shaper of human identity where nature is not a human construct but the very tool that forms or imprints personality. Drawing upon these two avenues of place theory broadens our understanding of the complexities behind the values projected upon a place by inhabitants, in addition to the molding of inhabitants by the very place they call home.

Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) explored the place and identity process by researching attachment to place in a residential London environment. The researchers examined how attachment to place affects and constructs individual identity using several

guiding principles that include self-esteem, self-efficacy, and distinctiveness where individuals are defined through local and nonlocal distinctions. Results of the research revealed that place was necessary for the continuance of specific values, to identify locals versus nonlocals, to symbolize and create a new self, and for maintaining aspects of self. For an example of self-maintenance, place was important for remembering the past and as a memorial to family and friends who were no longer living (Marcus, 1992). While most identity research focuses on social processes as the dominant constructor of identity, this study questions the claim that place identification is a type of social identification.

Social identity is only a part of the process in which a relationship is made between the self and the environment. This argument is made through the assumption that the factors connecting place and identity align with connectors between groups and identity. In addition to research conducted by Altman and Lowe (1992), research by Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) also suggested that while identity is partially a social construction formed through developed relationships with a geographic location, these social constructions occur when transactions are made with a specific environment (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Thus, “the environment becomes a salient part of identity as opposed to merely setting a context in which identity can be established and developed” (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996, p. 218). This research supports the theory that place is a salient characteristic of self-identification. In an Alaskan context, the geographic location of specific areas can both form and inform a subsistence user’s concept of self through interaction with place and others within the community of an area. Subsistence users can use the act of game harvest and plant collection to maintain concepts of distinctiveness, identify as a local Alaskan, and other processes of self-

esteem, self-efficacy, and continuity.

Research conducted by Williams and Patterson (1995) revealed the need for understanding place meaning for ecosystem management. Meaning is based upon social construction of symbolic and spiritual attachments placed with the environment and on the intrinsic value derived by individuals interacting on a nonconsumptive scale. In this sense, “abstract meanings tend to be symbolic” (Williams & Patterson, 1995, p. 10), and meaning can be created from symbols that represent an idea or concept of human ideals. One common example of powerful symbolism is the concept of wilderness where frontier lifestyles and individualism are symbolized within a place that is considered wild and untouched. Meaning assigned to the symbol is manifested by a “culture, social group or an individual” (Williams & Patterson, 1995, p. 10). Symbolism is a form of meaning-making that connects individuals to a particular setting and gives shape to understanding and associates value to place.

Use orientation describes the emotional attachment individuals can have with the natural environment and the impacts on attitudes through interaction (Ballantyne, Fien, & Packer, 2001; Opatow & Brook, 2003). Interaction with the environment that creates enjoyment can include collection of edible plants and other harvesting activities. Individuals who have positive or negative experiences in an outdoor environment will develop specific use orientations, or emotional attachments, to the outdoors. For example, individuals who harvest moose for food are predisposed to think negatively of predators that could have negative impacts on their connection to a specific activity and animal. Due to their positive interactions with an animal, individuals will tend to develop specific use orientations. While social values and norms of a specific social group are enforced

through emotions, such as enjoyment, hunting and gathering activities are not valued solely as a commodity, but also for the emotional benefits of connecting with the local human and environmental communities (Manfredo, 2008). Therefore, value is associated with positive affect of the experience.

Economics

In Alaska, subsistence activities are often combined with short-term or seasonal employment. State and federal agencies term this combination of dependence on subsistence and employment as a mixed subsistence-cash economy within Alaska (Wolfe, 1991). Subsistence activities are not only important for supplementing seasonal or short-term employment, these activities also enable hunters to continue living a resource dependent lifestyle. Research conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game on trapping activities in rural villages revealed a high dependence on trapping as an element of maintaining a connection to market economies (Wolfe, 1991). “For most trapping households in rural areas, trapping is generally profitable when attached to a larger complex of traditional fishing, hunting, and gathering activities” (Wolfe, 1991, p. i). Activities, such as trapping, garner cash gains that in turn supplement future hunting activities. Because hunting and collecting contributes to the mixed, subsistence-cash economies of Alaskan communities, economic reliance therefore affects the values associated with a rural dependence on local resources (Lonner, 1980). For example, individuals will run a winter trap line to harvest fur bearing animals that will then be sold for cash that will in turn be used to buy fuel for the snowmobiles that enable winter trapping (Wolfe, 1991). Therefore, subsistence is an important facet of rural culture not

only for intrinsic values, but for physical needs that can only be met through hunting and gathering activities.

Attitudes arise from values and are seen as object appraisal by the individual and can vary from community to community and by individual (Manfredo, 2008). In Alaska, place is valued, in part, for its consumptive richness. For example, Berman (1998) focused on the sustainability of subsistence in arctic communities and mentions that the success of hunting is “framed largely as a question of ensuring successful harvests of local natural resources to achieve consumption targets” (Berman, 1998, p. 2). These consumptive harvests, while resource dependent in practice, are also examples of a broader necessity relating to human nature where values are found in achieving harvest goals. While attitudes focus on attachment to place through dependence on a resource, individuals with deeply held beliefs can also exhibit ego defense and a need for continued acceptance by others as attitude characteristics within hunting communities.

Community and Family Life

Community and family are essential components to identity within many Alaskan communities. Within the community, there are multiple activities that contribute to the identity construction of individuals on a social level. Food sharing is an important at-home activity among communities where resources are distributed among family, close friends, and those in need (Nelson et al., 1982). The importance of forming identity, apart from a market system imposed through the buying and selling of product, is manifested through the freedom of sharing with others linked through the resource users. Research conducted in two villages in northern Alaska revealed an extensive network of food

sharing among families and homes linked through kinship ties (Magdanz, Utermohle, & Wolfe, 2002). Food sharing is important to forming cohesion among families. It also provides for other households who may not be able to hunt or who have been unsuccessful in their hunting activities (Nelson et al., 1982). The meaning-making of hunting is tightly bound to caring for individuals in the community who may or may not be connected to the resource user through family. At-home sharing reveals tightly bound connection between the resource users and their community.

The construction of identity from individual to community is further realized by the symbiotic nature of the relationship. While an individual cares for the needs of those in the community, the community in turn develops the identity of the resource user as provider. The importance of prestige has been noted in rural areas when a community acknowledges the skills of the hunter (Okada, 2010). Individuals who are shown prestige, which signifies the value a community places on an individual, are more likely to give back to a community in the future. The concept of dual reciprocity is noted in many communities where “those who [gave] were always formally acknowledged, and good hunters received much local prestige from their participation as providers of traditional subsistence foods in these events” (Dombrowski, 2007, p. 218). In this research, the hunter contributes meat in the form of moose, caribou, or fish to social gatherings, such as potlatches or special ceremonies. The hunter is in turn acknowledged and thanked by the community. Through this acknowledgement the identity of a hunter is validated through the act of hunting, and ultimately giving, once successful in the attainment of game meat. Sharing of resources is therefore an important facet of many rural and urban Alaskan communities (Wolfe, 1991).

Spiritual Identity

Spiritual identity is another component of identity construction that individuals use to facilitate their relationships to others and the natural environment. Spirituality is seen as “an interconnected, central component of culture that addresses experiences and beliefs related to transcendence, structures relationships with others and the natural world” (Hazel, 2001, p. 542). Relationships with nature are viewed through spiritual “lenses” and impact the way in which individuals relate to the natural world and the activities that take place within an environment. Kiesling, Sorel, Montgomery, and Colwell (2006) defined spiritual identity as a “persistent sense of self that addresses ultimate questions about the nature, purpose, and meaning of life, resulting in behaviors that are consonant with the individual’s core values” (p. 1269). If spiritual identity is aligned with an individual’s core values, then it can be assumed that behaviors expressed by an individual living in tandem with the natural environment are a result of a metaphysical connection either to nature or with nature as a tool to expedite the connection with a Higher Being. Due to the mixed Native and Euro-Americans living within Alaska, the meaning-making of spiritual attachment to the local environment is varied and stems from two main cultural avenues: Native and Euro-American spiritual meaning (Michaelson, 1983; Shultz et al., 2000).

In Native spiritualism, nature is viewed as an entity in itself worthy of worship and respect. According to Native Koyukon culture, “The deer deliberately gives itself to the hunter; it does not just wander into rifle range. Nature is not evidence of God’s glory...nature is itself God” (McGuire, 2009, p. 561). Nature is seen as “a conscious, sensate, personified entity, suffuse with spiritual powers” where “the spirits of nature are

vital, living parts of the land” (Nelson et al., 1982, p. 273). While Native spiritualism can vary in belief (Nelson et al., 1982), overall Native spirituality focuses on living in duality with the land where “subsistence is therefore both an economic pursuit and a vehicle for religious belief and practice. Indeed, the two realms are completely inseparable” (Nelson et al., 1982, p. 273). Because, for some, subsistence is a form of religious practice through interacting with the earth, connecting with the natural world is not merely a consumptive activity, but is also a deeply cultural and personal pursuit that affects the spiritual wellbeing of a Native subsistence user.

In contrast, traditional Western meaning-making is based on a Christian biblical interpretation that values nature as a vehicle for connecting with a Supreme Being (Shultz et al., 2000). Shultz discusses the biblical belief that mankind was to have dominion over the earth as commanded by God. However, as Shultz points out, a Hebrew definition of dominion is to serve or be in care of the natural world (Shultz et al., 2000). Therefore, some authors suggest that this gift of nature includes responsibility for the stewardship of natural resources that not only includes the utilization of resources for human benefit, but also a responsibility to care for the earth (Schultz et al., 2000). Nature is also viewed as a place where one can commune with God and as a place of refuge from the world (Stankey, 1989). Understanding this particular Western lens of spiritual involvement with the natural world reveals a perception of the earth as a resource to be used, albeit with conservation in mind. Subsistence users who are influenced by Western spirituality have the propensity to view their usage of resources as God-given and the environment as a place of personal growth and connection (Shultz et al., 2000).

Historical understanding of Western spiritual meaning is deeply entrenched in

biblical interpretation of mankind as having dominion over the earth. Adler (2006) took a historical look at the Christian perception of resource use as a relationship that provided for “enduring themes of receding frontiers, and frontiersmen who advance their culture’s psychological, social, and economic dominion” (Adler, 2006, p. 27). Having dominion is interpreted as mankind utilizing natural resources for personal benefit versus the belief that mankind is an equal partner in the ecosystem cycle. This perception that the environment is a place for consumptive use, growth, and worship of a supreme being affects the way in which Euro-Americans view, interact, and ultimately identify with, the natural environment in a subsistence context.

In research conducted by Myers and Russell (2003), results indicated that religious worldviews stemming from Euro-American spiritual beliefs greatly affected the way in which some present-day hunters connect with and perceived the wildlife within the natural environment. While biblical connections to the environment and the wildlife therein reveals a perception of inequality, Myers and Russell (2003) found that hunters who identified themselves as having Christian beliefs viewed black bears as a resource consumptively for their meat in addition to appreciating the beauty of the natural environment while hunting. Additionally, “respect is carried forward here as awe, and as a humane and utilitarian conservation ethic” (Myers & Russell, 2003; p. 84). In this study, hunters viewed black bears as a consumptive resource coupled with a personal respect for the complexity and uniqueness of the bears. Through respecting the bears, hunters expressed feelings of self-reflection in response to bear-human interactions. Ultimately, identity is connected to the way in which individuals communicate with wild animals and the ability for individuals to develop insight to self through “self-in-relation”

(Myers & Russell, 2003).

To better understand the collected data, we need to first understand the two cultural values that impacted the results of the research. Traditional Native Athabascan cultural values in addition to the values of Western culture greatly impacted the data results regarding value found within community, freedom, and connections to nature. Value systems encountered during the research consisted of traditional Athabascan cultural values and Western values. The value philosophies for Athabascan and Western culture groups will be discussed as follows.

Athabascan culture consists of keeping with traditional values that include a focus on community and family. Seyfrit et al. (1998) mentions that “in bush villages, traditional values and norms support subsistence hunting and fishing, community life, and the maintenance of family connections” (Seyfrit, Hamilton, Duncan, & Grimes, 1998, p. 346). Tradition is highly valued among Athabascan communities as well as the interconnectedness of family and the ability to provide for individuals within the community through harvest of fish and game. Additionally, connectedness to the land is tied to an individual’s sense of self and identity gained through their knowledge of the natural environment and ability to obtain resources. Nelson mentions that “the prime avenue to satisfaction and prestige is through providing resources from the environment. This is the...most pervasive theme of life” (Nelson, Mautner, & Bane, 1982, p. 294). These Athabascan values were experienced through interviews with participants from the community of Nikolai.

Western values consist of two main ideologies, the protestant ethic and the myth of the frontier that greatly impact the cultural mentalities of individuals from a Euro-

American background. The protestant ethic places value in discipline and order where much of the hard work ethos can be seen (Feather, 1984). Second, the myth of the frontier encapsulates elements of “innovation, adaptation, and invention—in economics, social organization, and government” (Billington, 1967, p.2) as characteristics of living a frontier life. The pursuit of economic viability in an unfamiliar and often harsh environment through creative means encapsulated the identity of the rugged individualist who pursued creative means of exploration and gain. This frontier lifestyle and protestant ethic is explored through the decimation of data in the communities of Cantwell and Nikolai. In this sense, these ideologies encompass a value system that includes “prominent economic movements; the growth of commercial and industrial activity in the East, and the agricultural and prospecting enterprises that moved westward” (Prasad, 1997 p. 130). In short, exploration, independence, and an acquisition of commodity are highly valued among individuals from a Westernized background.

What is interesting about the research involving subsistence communities around the Park—and for parks and communities in general surrounding Alaska—are the anthropologic and quantified biological lenses that have been traditionally applied when researching these areas (Berman, 1998; Brown, 1983; Nelson et al., 1983; Wolfe, 1992). While much of the literature revolves around game harvest or cultural traditions of subsistence communities, there has been little research involving a social-psychological approach to human behavior and subsistence. Identity literature focusing on nature and place connections have focused on nonsubsistence individuals, for example, urban communities or individuals of the general public (Manfredo, 2008; Myers & Russell, 2003; Proshansky, 1978). A research gap exists in the connection between subsistence

users in rural Alaskan environments and their motivations for identity construction.

Summary

Identity construction of the individual hunter is formed through more than one avenue of influence (Naess, 1989). Meaning can be created through perceptions placed upon an environment through social norms and culture. The natural environment in turn gives shape to an individual and forms their understanding of self in relation to others. Subsistence activities taking place within the environment build community between individuals (Nelson et al., 1982). Economic reliability is a strong facet of hunting where individuals rely upon their environment to supplement their livelihood. Native and Euro-American meaning can also vary in regards to spiritual connections to the local ecology (Nelson et al., 1982). Understanding the values, attitudes, and beliefs of hunters provide park managers with insight into the ways in which hunting is changing as culture and environment changes (Snyder et al., 2003). Piecing together how identity is created and what elements are important to users will provide managers with a better understanding of future needs for resident hunters in specific regions of Alaska. User-management liaison will ultimately benefit future research that will in turn protect a way of life for Alaskans across the state.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to develop a broader and more thorough understanding of how identity is constructed by living a subsistence life in rural Alaskan communities. Understanding what motivates subsistence, the values made through meaning, and beliefs that are constructed through culture as well as the individual, drove the questions for this study. The research questions for this study included the following:

1. How is identity constructed through subsistence activities?
2. How do subsistence activities affect one's connection to place, community, and family?
3. How does attachment to place affect human and nonhuman relationships within a subsistence context?

The information presented in this chapter addresses the methods and procedures necessary to accomplish the purpose. This chapter is divided into the following sections: (a) the study area, (b) data collection, (c) instrumentation, and (d) treatment of data.

The Study Area

I chose the three subsistence communities of Cantwell, Nikolai, and Lake Minchumina due to their proximity and connection to DENA. The federal subsistence

status set by the NPS for these communities has created an interesting and complex relationship with federal management and provides researchers with the opportunity to study communities that are not only dependent on resources situated within federally protected lands, but are actively managed and therefore connected to the policies and controls relating to a federal system (see Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4). As an outside source, NPS management is assumed to be impactful in the construction of identity for these four communities (Laven et al., 2001). Information gained regarding how communities construct identity and value subsistence activities is invaluable to federal policy makers and the implementation of future policy planning (Hansen, 2002). Additionally, personal and professional contacts were already situated within the research context through tribal entities and subsistence boards and acted as gateways for accessing individuals in the communities. The following figures provide readers with a broader understanding of the geographical placement of Nikolai, Lake Minchumina, and Cantwell within Alaska as well as in relation to one another and to DENA.

Nikolai

Nikolai is a largely Native Alaskan community, Lake Minchumina is largely non-Native, and Cantwell is a mixed Native and non-Native community and is also the only community situated on a road system. Due to the variance in community size, locations, and cultural distinctions, exploring identity construction from a large variety of resource dependent users had the potential for a fascinating, if complex, exploration of meaning-making in rural Alaska.

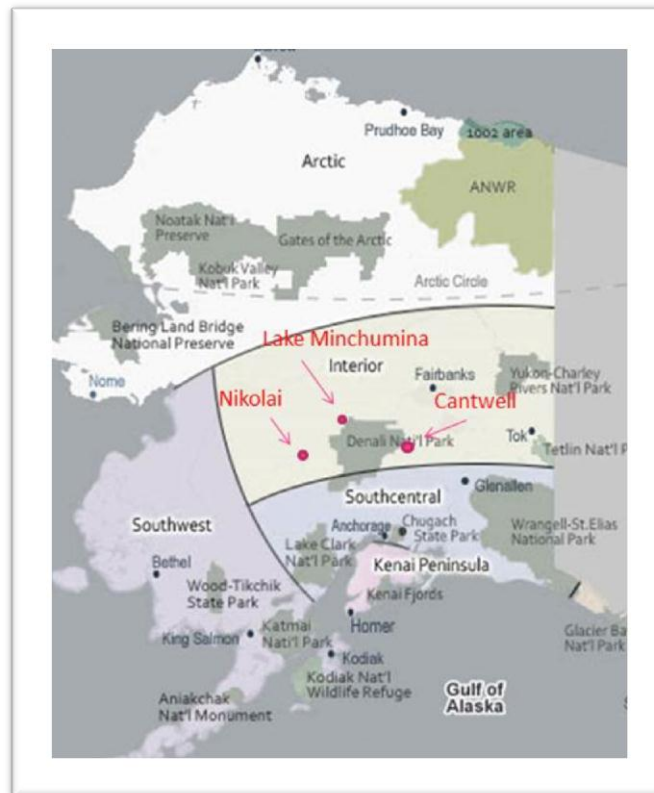


Figure 1. Map of communities within Alaska, Denali National Park and Preserve, and communities. Adapted from Alaska Stock Images, 2014a.



Figure 2. Location of the community of Lake Minchumina in relation to DENA. Adapted from Google Maps, 2014b.



Figure 3. Location of the community of Nikolai in relation to DENA. Adapted from Google Maps, 2014c.



Figure 4. Location of the community of Cantwell in relation to DENA. Adapted from Google Maps 2014d.

History of Nikolai Community

The community of Nikolai is situated roughly 100 miles from DENA and roughly 240 miles from the city of Fairbanks, AK (see figure 2). Historically, the people of Nikolai are descendants of one of eight bands subsisting and traveling within the drainages of the South Fork of the Kuskokwim River and the Tonsina River and into the inner park boundaries of DENA (Holen, Simeone, & Williams, 2006). Due to the language specifications and geographical location of Nikolai ancestors, the term “Upper Kuskokwim Athabascan” is used to describe the people of Nikolai as distinct from the multiple ethnic groups of Natives living within Alaska (Holen, Simeone, & Williams, 2006). The arrival of both Russian and American culture deeply impacted the Nikolai community. During the early 1900s when Russian missionaries arrived in Alaska a church was built at the first Nikolai site. The village, along with the church, was later moved to its present location after the area encountered river flooding. Families continued to live a nomad existence, traveling to and from fish camps and local hunting areas until a school was built in Nikolai in 1948. While traditionally the community of Nikolai consisted of several families who migrated to and from specific areas due to seasonal fluctuations in fish and game species, it was through construction of a local school building that the traditional fabric of Athabascan life in Nikolai was rewoven. The presence of a school within the community required that youth remain in the community for attendance purposes. Women were then also required to stay in the community of Nikolai to care for their families while men banded together to work trap lines or frequent hunting camps for subsistence purposes (Collins & Collins, 2000). Participants interviewed during the study were generally middle-age to late seniors. Three individuals

were in their mid to late twenties. Individuals of more advanced age had generally spent their entire lives living within Alaska and in many cases had traveled very little from their community. Younger generations had generally spent time living in Anchorage before moving back to Nikolai, all of whom had close family ties to the area. Life consisted of spending time with family and friends with hunting, fishing, and harvesting as important elements of the daily lifestyle. While participants focused on the importance of community and family during the study, some contention with Park management of subsistence was mentioned regarding the community's inability to access traditional Dahl sheep hunting grounds within the Park. Though individuals mentioned their historical and cultural ties to the area and the Dahl sheep hunting grounds, federally recognized subsistence harvest of Dahl sheep by subsistence users was not allowed under Park policy.

Social and Economic Demographic

According to State of Alaska census documentation of 2010, 94 individuals were currently living in the rural community of Nikolai. Of the 94 documented community inhabitants, 63 were male and 31 were female with the average age consisting of 39 years. Individuals living within the community were generally older and the population of individuals below the age of 39 was very low. Additionally, household information resulted in 37 designated households, 20 consisting of families with children and 17 homes of nonfamily with 15 living alone. Nonfamily households living alone consisted of 12 men and three women. Economic profiles of Nikolai are also important to take into consideration when the median income level of a household is estimated at \$15,000.

(2010 Census Demographic Profiles, 2014).

Natural Environment

The natural environment of the Nikolai area consists of geographical placement near the Kuskokwim River to allow for greater access to key hunting and fishing areas including the nearby communities of Medfra and McGrath. Climate is notably harsh during the winter months with temperatures reaching -60 while summers can exceed 80 degrees during warmer spells. The forests surrounding Nikolai are largely boreal with various moss species, black spruce, willow, alder, and birch (Holen, Simeone, & Williams, 2006). The ground is a mixture of permafrost and marshland where black spruce and moss are most comfortable while ground near the river experiences decreased levels of permafrost allowing for the growth of aspen and cottonwood. Travel during the nonwinter months is difficult due to the myriad of melting ground and swamps, lakes, and river areas that decrease an individual's mobility. During the winter when the rivers, lakes, and marshy areas are frozen over, travel by foot, snowmachine, or dogsled is greatly increased (Holen, Simeone, & Williams, 2006).

Larger wildlife familiar to the area includes moose, wolves, Dall's sheep, caribou, and black and brown bear (Holen, Simeone, & Williams, 2006). Smaller game animals include rabbits and beaver in addition to local birds such as grouse and ptarmigan. Other birds are also present, such as sand hill cranes, ducks, and geese, but due to their migratory nature are not consistent year-round. Aquatic species of fish are common in the Kuskokwim River to include various salmon types of chinook, chum, and Coho as well as several whitefish species of pike and grayling. While the land holds many types of

land and aquatic wildlife, the cyclic and migratory nature of many of these species ensures times of great abundance as well as seasons of scarcity throughout the year (Holen, Simeone, & Williams, 2006).

Lake Minchumina

History

The community of Lake Minchumina sits roughly 120 miles west of the Parks Highway (see Figure 3). Evidence of habitation at Lake Minchumina by various Native groups has been documented in the archeological record dating back to around 500 B.C. Native Athabascan were the most recent group to utilize the area for white fish and hunting purposes up until epidemics depleted much of the population during the early 1900s (Brown, 1983). Many of the surviving individuals moved to band with other groups outside of Lake Minchumina, and by 1907 the area was inhabited by fur trappers, fur farmers, and transient prospectors in addition to a small Native community. Influenced by WWII concerns, in 1941 the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) added infrastructure to Lake Minchumina's northern side by building a runway, several office buildings, and a small electrical plant (Holen, Simeone, & Williams, 2006). The runway still exists as the only form of transportation to and from Lake Minchumina. The FAA remained a presence in the community until about 1969 when war time infrastructure was slowly removed from remote Alaskan communities. In the 1960s the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) began utilizing Lake Minchumina as a base for firefighting efforts during the summer months that continues to this day. In response to the 1970s "back to the land" movement, the State of Alaska released a subdivision of land for private

purchase, which has created space for newcomers and long-term residents to establish homes in the area (Holen, Simeone, & Williams, 2006). Participants in Lake Minchumina were generally older, with no current youth established in the area. Individuals were largely retired and had continued to live in the area after their children had been raised. Trapping, fishing, and berry harvesting was common among the participants, most of whom had lived in Alaska their entire lives or had moved during the 60s and 70s from rural areas in the Lower 48. Additionally, at the time of the study, the culture of Lake Minchumina consisted of individuals from Western European backgrounds.

Social and Economic Demographic

According to State of Alaska census documentation of 2010, 11 individuals were currently living in the rural community of Lake Minchumina. Of the 11 documented community inhabitants, seven were male and four were female with the average age consisting of 36 years. However, during the time of the project, the youngest individual living within Lake Minchumina was in her fifties. Generally individuals living within this community were older, and individuals younger in age had either moved away or chose not to move to Lake Minchumina due to a lack of consistent employment in the area. Additionally, household information resulted in three designated households (however, at the time of visitation the researcher counted seven households occupied by one or more individuals). At the time of visitation, none of the households had children and were made up of either one individual living alone or couples. Economic profiles of Lake Minchumina are also important to take into consideration when the median income level of a household is estimated at \$40,000 (2010 Census Demographic Profiles, 2014).

Natural Environment

The natural environment of Lake Minchumina is both unique and abundant in its resources. The lake itself is immense, covering roughly 65 km and is 12 meters at its deepest and is therefore the distinguishing feature of the area. Small rivers feed into Lake Minchumina from the south and the west of the Lake with the main drainage for the Lake being the Muddy River to the east (Hall, 1995). The area surrounding Lake Minchumina is of lowland terrain and marshy, with numerous drainages and small forest scattered throughout. The lowland terrain allows for visuals of both the Alaska Range and the Kantishna Hills that can be seen to the east of the Lake. On a blue sky day Denali can also be seen rising massively from the earth (Holen, Simeone, & Williams, 2006). During the winter months, dog sled and snowmachine are used to cross the Lake and land, generally for accessing trapping areas, gathering wood, and commuting to and from the library and post office. In the summer and during fall and spring when the ice is cleared from the lake, canoe and skiffs are used by residents to access various lake regions. Trail and a gravel road system connect the runway and post office to several homes on the western side of the Lake. During the summer months four-wheelers are used for transportation on the western side of the lake.

Wildlife living in this diverse environment consists of moose, wolves, and black bear for the large mammals. Also abundant are smaller animals that include lynx, marten, mink, hares, fox, and porcupine. Birds are also in abundance, including many migratory species that are attracted to the lake for food and resting purposes. Similar to Nikolai, residents of Lake Minchumina also see cranes, ptarmigan, and grouse. Ducks, loons, and geese are also a large part of the wildlife community of the Lake. Various white fish

species exist in the lake and are highly utilized by community members for personal food as well as for food for dogs. Burbot, pike, and other species of whitefish are caught by drift net or by rod along the shoreline (Holen, Simeone, & Williams, 2006).

Vegetation is made up largely of coniferous white and black spruce with patches of birch, aspen, and balsam. In other regions of the eastern and western edges of the lake, boggy areas are formed in open canopy (Hall, 1995). In these areas, cranberries grow in abundance during the summer months amongst the low growing mosses and bushes. Along roadside areas, rose hips and wild raspberries can be found dotting the ground in small patches (Hall, 1995).

Cantwell

History

The community of Cantwell is situated roughly 150 miles south of Fairbanks and 200 miles north of Anchorage (see Figure 4). Cantwell is unique in that it is the only federally recognized subsistence-use community that resides on a road system. Up until gold was discovered in the Valdez Creek area in 1903, the only inhabitants to frequent the area were hunting groups of Native Athabascan people called the Ahtna (Simeone, 2000). At the time of discovery, a small group of Ahtna and miners settled in the area. The Alaska Railroad furthered the infrastructure by establishing a construction camp in Cantwell in 1916. Individuals, attracted to the steady employment opportunities brought on by mining and railroad companies, began to trickle into the area and establish residence. By 1950, Cantwell boasted a hearty population of 67 individuals (Williams, 2005). However, it was not until the creation of the Parks Highway in 1971 that Cantwell began feeling the changing cultural, social, and political stresses brought on by the new

infrastructure. Today, Cantwell is intersected by the Denali highways, passed through by the Parks Highway, and is currently 20 miles from the entrance to DENA. Several gas stations, restaurants, and a community post office can be seen from the road while “Old Cantwell,” located 2 miles off the Parks Highway, is home to a small airstrip, bar, and several residences. “Old Cantwell” is the traditional layout of the community prior to the designation of the Alaska National Interests Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), and locals differentiate between “old town” and “new town” based upon the original layout of the community. Individuals living within 3 miles of the post office are federally recognized as subsistence users while several subdivisions and homes spread out along both the Denali and the Parks highways are not allowed similar subsistence privileges despite their close proximity to the park area. This has caused tension between the community and the park that was apparent during participant interviews. Individuals often expressed their frustration over the forced dichotomy between those in the community who are allowed hunting privileges within the park and those who are not based solely upon their housing placement within “old town” Cantwell. Several of these individuals also felt that the federal designation of subsistence was unfair when hunting privileges were not extended to individuals who had spent most, if not all, of their lives living in Cantwell.

Social and Economic Demographic

According to the State of Alaska census documentation of 2010, 180 individuals were currently living in the Cantwell community. Of the 180 documented community inhabitants, 105 were male and 75 were female with the average age consisting of 46

years. While Cantwell had increased opportunities for employment, participants often lamented the lack of consistent employment and opportunity available to the younger generations of youth in the community. Youth in the community often left and migrated to the larger urban communities of Fairbanks and Anchorage in search of employment, resulting in a high population of older individuals left in the community. Additionally, household data resulted in 88 designated households, 60 consisting of families with children and 28 nonfamily households. The medium income level of a household is estimated at \$52,000 (2010 Census Demographic Profiles, 2014). The population of Cantwell consisted of both Western and Native Alaskan backgrounds. Individuals had either been born in Alaska and had lived in the area all their lives or had moved to Cantwell at a young age. Individuals were employed in the area through mining operations, businesses, or government work that was often seasonally focused.

Natural Environment

Cantwell's natural scenery is stunning. Tall mountains surround the community on all sides with views of the Alaska Range to the west and the Talkeetna mountains to the south. In the summer, the mountains glisten with a layer of soft, green tundra that turns shades of orange and red in the fall. Birch and spruce grow in the valley areas along with alder and several species of high and low cranberry bushes. Low growing blueberry bushes are abundant, drawing both visitors and locals to the many roadside and open areas. The Nenana River Canyon acts as a corridor through these mountain ranges for rail and vehicle transportation. Weather patterns vary throughout the seasons. Winters are expectably long, dark, and cold, with temperatures dropping into the -50s. In the summer,

the climate can fluctuate more than 100 degrees in the other direction with recorded temperature reaching the high 80s (Simeone, 2000).

The Cantwell area has been known for its abundant numbers of large game that includes moose, caribou, and Dall's sheep. Other species of wildlife that can also be found in abundance in the area included black bears, brown bears, wolves, ptarmigan, fox, grouse, and porcupine. Trapping for smaller fur animals was a part of the area's history. The rich natural resources of the area were such that Ahtna groups traditionally referred to the area as "*C'ilaan Na*" or "a lot of game is present place" (Simeone, 2000, p. 10). Other species of migratory birds, such as cranes and geese, were also seasonally connected to the area's resources. While salmon is not common to the area, several species of white fish and lake trout can be caught in nearby streams and lakes. Big game hunting of moose, caribou, and Dall's sheep, large and small fur animal trapping, as well as local fishing, are all a part of the lifestyle of the Cantwell area

Data Collection

Data were collected over a 3-month period with gaps between visits to each community. The logistics of planning visits during the summer months proved to be more challenging than anticipated due to busy employment that required either long hours or extended travel, planting, and harvest, in addition to hunting and fishing openings that took much of the community's time. Despite the logistics of visitation faced by the researcher, five site visits were conducted in total. Site visits to the more remote communities of Lake Minchumina and Nikolai were also more dependent on plane schedules, weather, and space availability. Though weather and passenger capacity

aboard smaller 10-seaters can prove to be challenging, the researcher did not encounter difficulty with scheduling although dates for fly-ins were set at specific weekly schedules of 3 days a week for both Lake Minchumina and Nikolai.

Data collection was conducted through recorded, semistructured interviews. Using open-ended questions (see Table 1) interviews were conducted with individuals to allow hunters to use detail and provide narrations of the topics as desired by them. A short demographic survey was also given to participants once the interview had been completed (see Table 2). Twenty-two surveys were collected from the 36 interviews. This method of inquiry gave structure to the topics of focus, such as family or sharing behavior, while allowing individuals to answer the interview questions in their own words. This allowed me to pinpoint themes and guide the conversation accordingly while exploring the overarching topic of identity as it was viewed by the participant. Allowing participants to answer questions in their own words helped me to identify meanings found in the subsistence experience based upon their own lens of interpretation (Richards & Morse, 2013). Interviews were generally conducted in the participant's home, but interviews were also conducted in a variety of places that included cafes, a bar, a participant's workplace, or in the entry area of the researcher's lodging. Interviews were either prearranged over the phone in Nikolai and Cantwell or scheduled during the community meeting in the case of Lake Minchumina.

In addition to recorded interviews, the researcher attempted to use photo important to the individual. Despite the fact that this form of data collection has been elicitation at the beginning of the research to pinpoint elements of subsistence that are through open-ended questions (Harper, 2002), due to a lack of time, interest, and trust on

Table 1: Interview Questions *

| |
|---|
| What comes to mind when you think of Cantwell/Lake Minchumina/Nikolai? |
| What was your childhood like? |
| What do you do for subsistence activities? |
| What is life like living in Nikolai/Lake Minchumina/Cantwell? |
| Do you harvest moose/caribou? What is that like? |
| Do you prefer to hunt with others or alone? |
| What do you like most about living in Lake Minchumina/Nikolai/Cantwell? |
| If you could plan an ideal hunting trip, what would that look like? |
| What does subsistence mean to you? |
| What is most important to you about subsistence? |
| Do you hunt moose? What is that like? |
| Do you hunt caribou? What is that like? |
| Do you fish? What is that like? |
| Do you dog mush/snowmachine? What is that like? |
| Who do you generally go hunting with? Why? |
| Why is that important to you? Is that important to you? |
| How long have you lived in Nikolai/Cantwell/Lake Minchumina? |

*Generally a photograph was shown to help guide the conversation and provide a visual of the subject matter.

Table 2 Sociodemographic profile of participants

| Sociodemographic Characteristics | Frequency * |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Gender | |
| Female | 15 |
| Male | 21 |
| Age | |
| 30 and Under | 3 |
| 31–40 | 0 |
| 41–50 | 2 |
| 51–60 | 7 |
| 61 and above | 10 |
| Highest Education Level | |
| Did not complete High School | 1 |
| High School Diploma | 10 |
| Technical School/Some College | 6 |
| College Degree | 3 |
| Graduate Work | 1 |
| No Answer | 2 |
| Income Level | |
| Under \$10,000 | 5 |
| \$10,000–20,000 | 4 |
| \$20,000–30,000 | 3 |
| \$30,000–40,000 | 3 |
| \$40,000–50,000 | 2 |
| \$50,000+ | 3 |
| No Answer | 2 |
| Religious Affiliation | |
| Other | 13 |
| No Answer | 1 |
| Russian Orthodox | 1 |
| Christian (Protestant) | 7 |
| Ethnic Description | |
| Native | 6 |
| Non-Native | 16 |
| Marital Status | |
| Widowed | 3 |
| Single (Never Married) | 5 |
| Prefer not to answer | 2 |
| Married | 7 |
| Living with partner | 2 |
| Divorced | 3 |

*Total number of collected surveys vary due to some individuals either refusing to complete questionnaire or not completing all questions as asked.

effective in uncovering deeper consciousness of meaning that may not have been realized part of many of the participants, photo elicitation and photograph attainment was not feasible for most participants. In addition to lacking the time for photography during the busy summer months of fish, game, and plant harvest, the researcher encountered varying levels of mistrust due to her affiliation with federal management, and in one case, possible state management. Collaborative studies between researcher and participant have proven to be more rewarding in regards to connecting with individuals as well as obtaining a stronger data set in the process (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004), but collaboration was found to be most feasible when trust had been established prior to the interview. For the research, the researcher purchased reusable, low-end digital cameras to lend to participants prior to the interview process. Individuals were asked to document elements of their community, subsistence activities, and nature, etc., that the researcher had planned to use to facilitate the interview process. While traditional photo elicitation has involved the researcher producing prechosen photographs for the interview (Harper, 2002), present research has shown that lending a camera to participants for a predetermined period of time can lead to a richer, more focused understanding of meaningful elements in the lives of participants. This form of reflexive photography allows participants to document objects that have meaning that would have gone otherwise unnoticed by the researcher (Kerstetter & Bricker, 2009). Due to prior research supporting not only the usage of photo elicitation but also the taking of photographs by participants, this method of data collection has given individuals a stronger voice as well as method for communicating personal meaning during the interview. However, the only community where individuals were interested in participation of the photo elicitation

component was Lake Minchumina. The researcher was successful in obtaining photographs from two individuals to use during the interview. Other individuals were given a camera, but did not have the time or interest in taking photographs prior to the interview. Generally, individuals from all communities politely refused my request for photographs. One Cantwell resident did express interest, but forgot to take photographs prior to the interview. Therefore, due to the lack of interest due to time and possibly mistrust on part of some of the participants, a set grouping of stock photographs of subsistence activities and local wildlife was used to facilitate the interviews. Stock photographs were used as backups when an individual refused interest in photo elicitation. Additionally, general exploratory questions (see Table 1) were asked to help guide the interview along with the stock photographs. Set questions without the use of photographs were found to be most effective and in some most familiar to the participants, possibly due to the normalcy of sharing information and stories as one would through general conversation. Throughout the course of the project, five individuals offered to show me their personal photographs of previous hunting trips and family, in addition to other subsistence activities, versus taking new photographs for the interview. Individuals who offered use of their personal photographs to facilitate the interview process were extremely excited about sharing stories about their subsistence lifestyle. While photo elicitation prior to the project was not successful, it is possible that personal photos kept by subsistence users can be helpful for future interviews. While photo elicitation was unsuccessful in most situations, I pursued asking participants for their assistance in this area throughout the course of the research while utilizing my own photos for the interview along with general questions as backups when individuals

expressed disinterest.

Participant Interviews

Due to the varying population and cultural limitations encountered with each community, contact and introduction was initiated differently in each community. Strategies for connecting with participants varied due to cultural reasons, such as gaining permission from the Nikolai tribal council; population size, such as connecting with a community of 200 versus a community of 10; and financial reasons that included budget limitations that only allowed for short visits to Lake Minchumina and Nikolai. Additionally, for Lake Minchumina, one visit was adequate for acquiring needed interviews with residents due to the small population size. At the time of the visit, 10 individuals were living in Lake Minchumina. All but one participant was interviewed due to the individual's absence from the community for work-related reasons. Visitation took place over a period of 4 days from August 15th to August 19th. Due to the small population of the community of Lake Minchumina, the researcher scheduled an informal welcome meeting that included food and allowed for her to introduce herself, project interests, and gain a feel for individual curiosity for the project. The hope was that this format would facilitate in connecting the researcher with subsistence users prior to the interview process. Participants were extremely interested in the project, and the researcher was able to schedule meetings with all residents for the following days of the visit. Meetings took place at the residents' homes. Much of Lake Minchumina residents are either couples or individuals living alone. During the visit, a total of five interviews were conducted, three with individuals and three with couples. While most of the

individuals lived on the western side of the lake near the post office, two individuals lived across the lake and were only accessible via boat. Generally meetings took place two per day, one in the morning and one in the evening with a break during midday. Interviews lasted roughly 45 min to 3 hours with the longer interviews taking place with couples. In all, four men and five women were interviewed during the visit with one man and one woman living alone and one female living with her sister. The three couples interviewed were husband-wife or partners for 10 or more years. Time was also spent exploring the area, participant's home and gardens, and in one situation picking berries and pulling fish from gillnets.

Cantwell interviews, due to the larger population size, were conducted in a series of three visits from August 8 to August 13th, August 23rd to September 1st, and September 14th to September 18th. Due to the large population size of Cantwell, the researcher prepared 200 welcome letters and had them sent to the post office as general delivery. The strategy was to seek interviews with the largest amount of individuals possible to seek data saturation (Creswell, 1998). Snowball sampling was then used to gain participants interested in sharing about their subsistence lifestyle (Richards & Morse, 2013). Sending introduction letters to the community through USPS mail was helpful during interview solicitation as individuals often remembered the letter upon meeting the researcher either in person or over the phone. Individuals were generally contacted by phone through suggestions made by key informants; however, in several situations the researcher was also taken to residents' homes and introduced by other individuals the researcher had met while in the community. This was particularly helpful in regards to understanding not only the geographical layout of Cantwell, but to also help form

relationships with individuals with the help of a trusted community member. Two contacts were also made during church functions, which was helpful in meeting individuals and forming friendships prior to the interview. Three interviews were collected during the first visit: two taking place with female residents and one with a male resident who was one of only two individuals to contact the researcher through the USPS sent letters of introduction (the second male individual was not able to be reached due to issues with phone service and travel plans on his part). The second site visit taking place August 23 to September 1st was the most successful in regards to attainment of participants for interviews. Generally, length of time spent in a community was helpful in meeting others and becoming involved with community activities, such as church or BBQ functions. During the second visit, six individuals were interviewed over a period of 9 days. Of these six individuals, four were male and two were female. Interviews were conducted either at the home of the individual, or in two cases, at a local bar/café. Interviews generally lasted 45 minutes. In three cases, interviews lasted 2 to 3 hours. During the final site visit that took place in Cantwell from September 14th to 18th, two people, a male and a female, were interviewed separately. One individual was met in her home and the other individual was met at a local café. Each interview lasted roughly 30 to 45 minutes.

Nikolai interviews were conducted during two site visits: the first taking place July 11th to 18th and the second September 9th to 12th once permission for the research had been obtained from the Nikolai Edzeno' Tribal Council. The researcher first contacted specific key leaders in the communities who served on tribal councils as well as subsistence boards to seek their guidance and recommendations for obtaining

interviewees. This was to be especially helpful in the Native community of Nikolai where specific cultural leaders are respected and trusted. Upon arriving to the community, the researcher was encouraged to meet specific individuals by a key informant through the Tribal Council. Additionally, an individual within the community offered to take the researcher from home to home to meet individuals. Once the researcher became familiar with the layout of the village, she continued to meet individuals through door-to-door introductions, through walking the community, and over the phone. Additional introduction was made over VHF radio. During the first visit from July 11th to 18th the researcher was able to obtain nine interviews, six with males and three with females. Interviews were generally 30 to 40 minutes long and took place at the participant's home, place of employment, or in the lounge of the City Lodge. During the second visit seven individuals were interviewed, five men and two women. All the interviews, except for two taking place at the participant's work locations, took place in the homes of the participants. Interviews during this second visit lasted 30 to 60 minutes.

Participants were assured of their anonymity and given a letter of confidentiality. Those interviewed were renamed, and references to places, personal family information, and private information were kept in confidence and referred to abstractly in written form. The researcher was aware of the importance of ethical boundaries with participants to protect others as well as herself during both the interview and the writing process. Interviews were also scheduled at times most conducive to the participants needs, for example, evenings or weekends when participants may have additional free time. Also, interviews were conducted in a variety of places including participant's homes, places of work, local cafés, and bars. The sound recordings were then transcribed once the

recordings had been finished.

Positionality: My Role as Researcher

As a female in her late twenties, I was aware of how my positionality had an effect on the research (Berger, 2013). As a female in largely male dominated communities, I had a better chance of gaining access to individuals, such as other females, during the interview process. Exhibiting an open, friendly, and honest rapport with individuals and reiterating my standing as an unassuming college student helped to break down the outsider perception.

Additionally, being an Alaskan resident myself and having lived a resource-dependent lifestyle while growing up in Southeast Alaska gave me an insider's understanding of resource dependence, state politics, and a hard-work mentality that was beneficial when relating to others. My familiarity with hunting, game preparation, running trap lines, snowmobiles, the wearing of appropriate clothing for the climate, and other facets of Alaskan life positioned me as an individual already familiar with Alaskan lifestyle activities.

My professional experience with subsistence management stemmed from past employment and internship positions with DENA and the Commercial Fisheries Division, a part of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). During the summer of 2011, I worked in close contact with DENA to administer surveys to the public and collect wildlife data, as well as research subsistence information and prepare drafts for publication. It was during this time that I was exposed to the unique management of subsistence within the park and the regulation of these activities. During

the summer of 2011, I was able to converse with individuals practicing subsistence use and experience community life in a rural setting. During the summer of 2012, I worked as a Fisheries Technician for ADF&G. In this position I interacted with many individuals within the department as well as the public, while managing both commercial and subsistence fishing along the Yukon and Tanana rivers. These professional experiences helped develop networking skills with various types of individuals within the field and exposed me to the challenges that exist when working with resource users as well as managers who hold varying opinions in regards to management.

Treatment of Data

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, qualitative research methods were chosen to collect data and to analyze identity construction as a phenomenon among subsistence users (see Table 3). Phenomenology research was an appropriate fit in this setting to provide an exploratory and creative methodology for analyzing a participant's attachment to a subsistence lifestyle. Richards and Morse (2013) suggest that this methodology "offers a descriptive, reflective, interpretative, and engaging mode of inquiry from which the essence of an experience may be elicited" (p. 67). Because interviews gave the researcher the opportunity to code for themes relating to the research questions, using phenomenology helped the researcher understand the "essence of experience" associated within the Denali area and gain insight into how subsistence users find meaning through hunting and gathering activities. Additionally, phenomenology is based on two core assumptions where (1) understanding an individual's perceptions gives insight into their lived experience and (2) that an individual's existence in the world is of value to themselves and others (Creswell, 1998; Richards & Morse, 2013, p. 68).

Table 3 Themes and Subthemes for Cantwell, Nikolai, and Lake Minchumina

Main Theme and Theme Definition**Community Connectedness (*n* = 34)**

This theme was often mentioned by participants regarding their connectedness to the community in relation to sharing of resources (generally foods) with one another. Additionally, knowledge was another resource that individuals shared amongst each other. Individuals spoke of the importance of having friendships, particularly in having a community of individuals with shared interests and of similar mindsets.

Family Connectedness (*n* = 34)

This theme was defined through participants' descriptions of time spent together between spouses as well as sharing and passing knowledge down to children. Often time spent together was mentioned in the context of the hunting, fishing, and living a subsistence lifestyle in the outdoors. Family connectedness was also seen through the value placed on caring for elderly relatives, such as grandparents, and the historical connections to family that was an important aspect of attachment to place.

Nature/Place Connectedness (*n* = 34)

This theme was exemplified through the value placed upon the enjoyment of nature and the local scenery, local resource dependence such as harvest of local game and plant materials, a strong knowledge of local wildlife and characteristics of the local environment and its seasons, and a deep connection to place due to extended time spent in the area.

Economics (*n* = 32)

This theme was characterized by a lack of steady income in rural areas where employment was often seasonal and short term in nature. This in turn resulted in individuals seeking various forms of employment throughout the year. High costs associated with living rurally resulted in a strong dependence on subsistence to supplement personal income.

Freedom as a Value (*n* = 18)

This theme was highly valued amongst participants, particularly in regards to living apart from federal and state policy. Having the ability to live a subsistence lifestyle and to choose an occupation outside of the general norm was also an important facet of living in a rural Alaskan community.

Health (*n* = 8)

This theme was mentioned in relation to the importance of obtaining and utilizing subsistence foods for personal consumption. Subsistence foods were considered healthier and more palatable than store-purchased products.

Solitude (*n* = 14)

This theme was highly valued and mentioned frequently during the interviews. Solitude brought not only physiological healing, but psychological healing through the low-stress of living in a rural environment. Solitude was also seen to enhance one's connection to nature, particularly wildlife. Lastly, solitude was mentioned in contrast to large cities full of people where noise was an abundant feature of the cityscape. Solitude was seen as a valuable resource when living in a rural environment.

Table 3 Continued

No-Waste Lifestyle (*n* = 28)

This theme was highly valued by participants. This was noted in an individual's ability to live a simple lifestyle and through the conservation of local resources, particularly with hunting and harvest of local game.

Tradition/History (*n* = 30)

This theme was mentioned in conjunction with Native Athabascan culture, length of time spent in an area that varied among participants, and as part of living a simple lifestyle as a component of traditional subsistence behavior.

Technology (*n* = 7)

This theme was generally mentioned in relation to television, video games, and computers and was seen as having a negative impact on local communities, especially in regard to youth. These forms of technological entertainment reduced connectedness to nature, family, and friends in the community.

Childhood Connections (*n* = 29)

This theme was frequently mentioned in regard to childhood connections to hunting and spending time with family and friends in the outdoors. Individuals mentioned living a subsistence lifestyle as children in Alaska or as a similar lifestyle in rural farming communities in areas of the continental United States.

Survival/Dependence (*n* = 28)

This theme was mentioned as having a strong sense of conservation or respect for local resources that was often mentioned in comparison with the value systems associated with outsider versus local differences.

Table 3 Continued

| Main Themes | Subthemes *The main theme relating to “Freedom as a Value” was not present in Nikolai. Likewise, the theme “Traditional/History” relating to Native culture was not present in the interviews in Lake Minchumina or Cantwell. | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|---|--|---|
| Community Connectedness | Sharing of Resources | Sharing of Knowledge | Friendship | | |
| Family Connectedness | Husband and Wife Bonds | Sharing/Passing Knowledge to Children | Caring for Grandparents/Parents/Grandchildren | Spending Time Outdoors as a Family | Historical Connections to Family-Heritage |
| Nature/Place Connectedness | Enjoyment of Nature/Scenery | Resource Dependence | Knowledge of Wildlife/Seasons | Connections to Place through Time | |
| Economics | Lack of Steady Income in Rural Areas | Diverse Income | Supplementing Income with Subsistence | High Prices Associated with Living Rurally | |
| Freedom as a Value | | | | | |
| Health | | Subsistence is Healthier Food than Store Purchased | | | |
| Solitude | | Connecting with Nature | | | |
| No-Waste Lifestyle | Traditional Athabaskan Value | | | | |
| Tradition/History | Native Culture | Time in an Area | | | |
| Technology | Negative for Community/Youth | Reduces Connectedness to Nature/Family/Friends | | | |
| Childhood Connections | Childhood Hunting | Outdoors with Family/Friends | Being Taught by Family/Friends | | |
| Survival/Dependence | Conserving/Respecting Resources | Outsiders Versus Locals | Sharing Knowledge | | |

The elements of phenomenological research are based in the understanding that reality is a social construct that is constantly changing with time. Therefore, the methods used to collect and interpret data were entrenched in the belief that reality is a social construction. While data sources can vary, this particular project allowed me to collect the impressions and perceptions of individuals living in rural and semirural Alaskan communities. Ultimately, phenomenology allowed me to discover new categories of meaning developed by individuals who live subsistence lifestyles. Using these particular methods to analyze and better understand identity, as well as the human dimension characteristics that connect individuals to both natural and human environments, were the central motivators for this research project.

Because data are intimately involved with our understanding of social meaning, data saturation (Creswell, 1998) is vital to gaining a deeper understanding of individual's connections to the surrounding social and nonhuman environment. In phenomenological research, data are analyzed for meanings that relate to the themes and specific statements collected from participants where "the reality of an object is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual" (Creswell, 1998, p. 53). Additionally, phenomenology is situated within a "philosophy without presuppositions" where the researcher lays aside assumptions and instead relies on personal creativity and universal structures to better understand the experience of the participants (Creswell, 1998, p. 52). Qualitative data collection generally requires researchers to collect 20 to 30 interviews to gather the appropriate amount of information needed to accurately describe and explain a specific social phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). In this particular case the social phenomenon is identity construction that centers on how individuals continually recreate

and reconstruct their relationships with others in a subsistence life or lifestyle context.

In keeping with the phenomenological tradition, I analyzed for themes, reoccurring motifs, and concepts from the transcribed data that were redundant in nature. For example, the individuals often discussed the importance of not wasting resources, generally in reference to harvested game, but also in reference to other resources such as gas or wood. I generally assigned a theme to an idea that was either repeated more than once between participants or that was repeated several times throughout the course of one interview (see Table 3). For an example of the latter, one individual I interviewed in the community of Cantwell repeatedly mentioned how Alaska was where he had been able to go and choose a life different than the farming options of his hometown in Oregon. Through different stories and explanations of his background, he repeated his desire to live his own life under his own accord. I categorized this concept of lifestyle freedom as a theme particular to this person, albeit freedom from laws and government were also under the theme of freedom, I decided that lifestyle freedom was also a connected subtheme.

Understanding identity construction was linked to the repetition of ideas and themes as described by the participants. I categorized topics and structure the information into sections that included family, community, connections to nature, solitude, economics, freedom, frugality, tradition, dependence, health, and technology to identify the reoccurring themes obtained during the conversations that served as a mode of open coding. To cross-check my themes and better organize my data, I shared my data analysis with my Denali contact who was familiar with the communities to check for appropriate organization.

Data were collected through a total of 6 site visits, one to Lake Minchumina, two to Nikolai, and three to Cantwell. Individuals were contacted through a variety of ways depending on the community. Nikolai's Edenzo' Tribal Council was contacted first for approval of the project, an announcement was made over VHF radio to the community, and a combination of phone calls, referrals, and door-to-door introductions were conducted during the two visits to illicit interest in the project. Due to the small population size of Lake Minchumina, a community meeting was organized by the researcher and the details of the project presented at the group meeting. Due to the large size of Cantwell, letters of introduction were sent general delivery via USPS and individuals were contacted by phone to illicit interest. For both Nikolai and Cantwell, contacts were made through general visitation at get-togethers and through referrals from key informants.

Interviews were generally conducted in the home of the participant, although interviews were conducted at a participant's place of work, in cafés, and in the living room of the Nikolai lodge. A small audio recorder was used to record the interviews that were later transcribed through an Atlas Ti qualitative research program. Photo elicitation was attempted throughout the time of research with little interest. Backup photographs were generally used by the researcher to help guide the conversation and act as prompts for the participants if individuals did not supply their own or agree to participate in photography prior to the interview. General questions involving "What does subsistence mean to you?" and "What is it like living in Nikolai/Lake Minchumina/Cantwell?" were also utilized to help explore this concept of subsistence and its relation to identity.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of this study as it was collected for this project. Due to the differences in data themes as presented by community, the data is summarized in three sections through data collected in the communities of Nikolai, Cantwell, and Lake Minchumina (see Table 3). Definitions for the themes are also explained (see Table 4).

Nikolai

Interpreting Nikolai Subsistence Users Identity

Understanding the historical, environmental, and demographical information of the Nikolai community provides insight into the data themes as they pertain to this research. The salient themes repeated throughout the interviews while in Nikolai reveal a deep connectedness to place as a means for community reliance, family, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) of the area. Themes involving community, family, tradition, economics, and health will be discussed in the following sections.

Main Theme: Community Connectedness

Nikolai was found to be a tightly knit community with many relationships formed through marriage and family connections. The connectedness aspect of the community took place not only through the structured environment of small cabins and homes built close together, but through the needs of the community that were seen through giving and sharing of resources. This was both seen as a necessity for survival and wellbeing, but also for traditional purposes where sharing was an expected behavior among Athabascan families, particularly in respect of elders and those of an extended age in the community. The sharing of fish, game, and berries was mentioned frequently among participants.

[If] somebody come[s] to me...hungry, yeah I share with people. But that is why I told you [that you] can move up [to the house], I [have] some moose meat... I got moose meat, frozen goose, sheefish, salmon berries...

Just take [a] blanket and tarp, got to make it look better. And smoke [the fish]... every day. I could do that. Last year I did. And I share[d] [them] with elders. Boy they [were] happy. Sometimes I make good only if I take care of them good. If you want to or if you do not want to [share], [it] doesn't matter with me. I like to share food. In the winter if you walk around like, right now somebody [has some] nice fish... hanging in [the] smokehouse and... some will...cut you a piece. That is the way I work with people.

Well when [the meat is] dry, you are happy, wow, You [have a lot] to eat so you share it with your friends. Get them [a] little box [of] something. [Sharing] make[s] them [happier] and you get more friends.

Subtheme: Sharing

Sharing with elders in the community was also mentioned as a way in which to help those who were older and unable to subsist on their own. Additionally, a strong element of respect was apparent in the action of giving.

Whoever gets first moose we give it out to elders at least for one meal, like one steak. Whoever gets first moose you know. It is always good to have fresh meat.

I haven't given hardly [any] to [the] elders yet, but I just give [the berries] away to family who needs it or for feasts. Other than that just use [the berries] for personal use. I just sent my grandson a whole bunch of salmon berries. He loves them. But I told him, well [I] have to get out there and pick some more. I have some in the freezer...but I need to get back out there.

Participants mentioned the help that they received through others in the community. One individual in particular, due to his advanced age and a wildlife encounter that almost ended his life, enlisted the help of other hunters in the community to harvest his moose for him.

When I was young[er] I was lucky [when this [moose] charged me, five years ago, five times. Almost got me. Shook me [up really] good. No more hunt[ing]. [ADF&G gave] me papers [for hunting]. Every year [in] September somebody hunts for [me]. I just buy him gas.

I [was] scared five times so I finally [asked the] game warden which way is the easiest way I could get meat. [He] said he could give me a paper [and I could} have somebody sign that...give them all the old papers, harvest ticket, [and] gas. And when he come[s] here he hang[s] [the meat] up in my smokehouse. And I did no [need to do] anything. Just cut...up [the moose]. [My friend] got me [for] 5 years got me five bulls.

Help was also given in the community through harvest of fish and game, wood cutting, and dog mushing.

Yeah I just have to have somebody two [or] three of us, you know. You cannot go hunting alone because it is hard work. Or you can run the boat. One guy has to release the net, all of them, or we start drifting or we get close to shore.

After you run low [on wood] or if somebody needs wood...you just go out and cut it. I usually go out and cut...all day for like a couple 3 day[s]...then haul [the wood]. Doesn't really take too long. And after that you just sit around, wait for the next time you [have to] go get wood...

I used to go help [my relative] too, with her dogs, I was always the weight in the basket. I went on good trips. I just helped her with the dogs. Hitching and unhitching, that type of stuff. But it was fun. And the dogs we had...they helped us around here... hauling the wood back and forth [and] getting the wood.

One strong theme frequently repeated during an interview was an individual's desire to

help change the negative behavior of the younger generations in the community through giving of both resources and knowledge. Seeking the knowledge of elders as well as sharing knowledge with youth appeared to be an important element of daily life.

But I could help [the youth]...I can talk to them, I can buy [plane] ticket[s], I can buy them [a] jacket. I can help them if they want to go back home. I show them what I am, me. But other people just kick them out [of the house]. [I] cannot do that. You have to help them before you die. [The] reason why I left [the youth was because] they [drank] too much. These kids start drinking [and] pass my big window at [my] house and [they] play with guns [at] night time when I am sleeping. [They] run all over with my bike [at] midnight. Now [when] I look back I should [have told] them to go home.

I learned how to cut up [fish] from my dad and he learned from all the elders around here because he is from Copper River, Chitna area, grew up in Chitna. And so he learned from the elders around here, learned the channel on the river, how to cut up moose [and] he does it the traditional way [with] no sawing [the meat] up or something like that. I mean, just skin it and joint it up all the joints and everything, gut it. Save all the guts.

White people, Natives, are [all the] same, elders, they have stories. You have to ask questions once in a while. Well when they start talk[ing], listen. That is how I [live]. Like [the elder in the Village] [when] he starts [to] talk I listen [and am] quiet. Or [my other friend], anybody. [My friend, talk church, I listen to them. [They have a lot] of words [to share].

I ask lots of [the] elders, what's up with the fish? Maybe they race [up the river] late, I do not know.

Now I look back today [and it] reminds me...what I did...why I do that...But it is all passed, but [I] still think about [the past]. [I] talk to [the] kids [and tell them to] stay away from alcohol. [Then they] might end up [a] pretty good guy, a good leader in the village, because [we] will be gone pretty soon.

Today when I look [back], I see [it does not] matter [if] I'm Native, Athabaskan, Eskimo, white people, half-breed, [or] colored; [we] are one people. Doesn't make [any difference]. You have to love them [and] talk to them [about] the way you grew [up].

I like to teach too you know. I am [a] person like anybody else, but I do my [own] way, try to stay...[on the] right trail...You go [on the] wrong trail sometimes...if you remember 10 years from today everyone... I know will be older [and will say] oh that son of a gun, old bugger, [he is] still alive.

Nice country [for] hunting [and] traplines...I talk to [the] village elders every day and I listen to them... I cannot keep quiet in Nikolai, I...[have] to do something. [Share about] how I grew up, why I love everybody, [even] my enemies...

Once we are gone we are gone. I try to teach the kids work ethics right now as we speak. I'll just tell them once, and if they do not listen, I am not going to ask and bother teaching them. If they do not have respect for me I wouldn't have respect for them.

Subtheme: Friendship

Friendship connections were also spoken of having importance in the community connectedness of Nikolai. Individuals spent time sharing experiences, harvesting fish and game, as well as the knowledge of the activities. The social aspect of being together was an important theme.

Have to be two, three, [people] I do not care. More people...can [share] evening stories. [I] listen to them...Two [or] three [is] better.

[Village elder is] older, he's doing good, very good. [I] help him [by] talk[ing] to him, visit[ing] him, give him something. [I] talk [to the] elders. And [then] you live long.

I was thinking about getting seven dogs. I do not know where but if they travel down river [I can] visit people, talk about them, [go to] Aniak.

No [it is] better [if I] stay, I...[have] two house here, good traplines, hunting, [and] boating. I never think about the women though. [I am] too old. I...[have] lot of friends [like the] Elders. I visit [them] every day and help myself [to a] cup of tea. And that is the way I like it. Steam baths every night. People call me [on the phone].

I just do not eat pike. But some people eat them. Like Carl is really big on pike. He eats pike. You sit around and socialize, BS with everybody ice fishing. It is kind of fun.

Being here and the community. It is like coming home. That is what I thought. Even if this house was just the way it was, it was like coming home still....and then when the plane comes [and] this still gets me today, like I'm just going to McGrath for a day trip and then I come back and everybody meets the plane. Every time. Just to go see [everything]. [They are] bored I guess. It is a way of

socializing because you see people at the plane that you normally wouldn't go visit.

When we were up here in [the] mountains with my dad and [the] guys would know what to do. One guy would make the shish kabobs. One guy would get the water. Couple other guys would get the cooking sticks ready. I mean everybody knew what to do. Didn't even have to ask. One guy would get the teapot ready in a matter of 15 to 20 minutes, [and] we would have a roaring fire, and we would have that water boiling and drinking coffee sitting around by the fire. Talking about mistakes [made during the day] or how the hunt could have [gone] better.

It depends on what kind of mood I'm in. Usually I go out with other women because that is better to go pick berries with somebody else than it is by yourself. But sometimes I go out by myself and pick berries.

Community was spoken of as a place that allowed for both friendship choice and like-minded acceptance by others.

It is like you are stuck at fish camp and there [are] just the people there. I mean it is not bad, but [it] gets boring. I remember we'd go to Stewarts that is, you know going to McGrath, and [to our friend's fish camp] we used to fish there with [our friend]. There are always things to do at fish camp, but I do not know, it just seemed lonely. Just, you know, it is like the same people or something. Being in a community too, I mean it is small, but, I do not know, like you get to pick and choose who you see or who you want to see.

I do not do subsistence, but I am a part of the community. They'll try and get me involved the best way they can. Because they know I'm a nice guy and I won't say anything.

I would prefer [fishing] with people. I would go by myself though. It is better with people to talk to. Otherwise you are just sitting there by yourself...

Main Theme: Family Connectedness

Family was found to be very important within Nikolai and included repeated mentions of husband and wife companionship, passing of knowledge to children, caring for relatives, spending time together as a family outdoors, and ancestral connections to family. During one interview, a resident mentioned that "Everybody is my aunt or uncle

or cousin out here. I think I could name off easier the people I'm not related to."

Subtheme: Husband/Wife Companionship

Husband/wife connections were important in regards to connecting with one another in a partnership.

This old couple in town, they have been married for a long time. A lot of couples out here that I know, they were together since I was a kid, seriously.

I've watched my partner trap and picking out the good spots. First you have to realize where they're coming from, you can look at the tracks from the snow. And learning how to read it, how old is it, how many days ago, if it was fresh or new, just passing by. It is pretty awesome...[my partner] got an owl in his trap once, and it was a baby one, and what we did was he took off his coat and put it over the owl and then slowly...try to open that trap...

I [took] both of my wives moose hunting [and on the] trapline, but my second wife [went] hunting [for a] big bull, [the] biggest bull in Nikolai.

I went with my husband yeah. He used to go trapping, in fact last spring was the first time...nobody in my family set a snare.

Subtheme: Knowledge Sharing

Passing of knowledge to the younger generation was a salient theme within Nikolai among families. The sharing of knowledge was conducted from parent to child or grandparent to grandchild regarding appropriate behavior towards elders and assisting family as well as those in the community when needed.

It is like grandma always taught us [to] go to your uncle's house [because] he needs his dishes washed or just to sweep his floor. Just go over there and just do [work]. It was expected. I mean that is what they taught us.

Well growing up we, like my dad would help maybe [his uncle] when he'd go guiding when [his uncle] needed help. We would get meat that ways.

I [became]...wiser and [wanted] something to do. [I was] bored. Plus I wanted to help my mom. Help her put away more fish. She's 82. I'll help my mom again

because I'm going to learn how [to cut fish].

My grandpa, he wanted me to stay with him when I was a kid. When I was about 10, 10 years old, my grandpa wanted me to stay with him, but I didn't want to. I wanted to stay with my parents. Now that I'm older [I realize that] I should have stayed with my grandpa. I [would have] learned a lot more from him than stay[ing] with my parents and my brothers and sisters. Those things were more important when I was young.

The treatment of nature and wildlife was an element of knowledge passed from adult to child, more commonly from a relative, such as a parent or a grandparent.

I've only seen them like fall time when it turns... brown. My mother used to tell me fall time after all the leaves are gone, that is the time to dig [the carrots] out. I learned that from my mom too like going out hunting. You'd hear some people some guys talking and saying oh yeah we're going up North Fork [to] get a good bull. I turned around and [would] tell my boys you never say that, you do not make predictions like that. So when they ask me where I'm going I'll tell someone I'm going up North Fork. I left a log over there. Going to pick it up. You do not go out, you do not go say like you are going to go out and catch a moose. [Because it] might never happen. My mom used to tell me "animals hear you too." They hear you. That is something I learned from her, and every time I'm going hunting I do not say anything like I'll go out there and catch a moose. I'm just going out there and going to do something. It works.

My grandpa was telling me old stories about caribou hunting, and he was trying to break one's neck, and he went up and grabbed it by the horns, and it woke up [and] his buddy shot it. They were trying to save ammo, I guess. I was like dang, I wouldn't save that extra shot. I would make sure it [was] dead. He said it got up and was gone, and the buddy was like BOOM. And I was like, you guys are crazy! They used to hunt [caribou]. I've never hunted them really. I've just hunted moose.

Being out there in the woods. Living off the land. That is really what I like you know. [In] winter time you could do the same thing. Just go out there and make camp and if you have to go out looking for your lunch, just go out there and start hunting around. Some people like these rabbit snares, snaring rabbits and all that. That is what I wanted to get into with my youngest son Timothy.

My uncle was telling my son... when you build [a fish wheel] next year, it is going to be better and it is going to catch lots of fish. And he's already thinking about wanting to go and build another one next year.

[A lady in the Village] told me about her trapping days. I know she did it for practice from her father and who else trapped, [another Nikolai lady]. I know only

the elders did when they were young.

Individuals mentioned the influence of family members on learning how to live a traditional and subsistence lifestyle.

That is where I learned how to survive, food, hunting, fishing [from my chief]. [How to] pick berries, walk up the mountain [and] shoot black bear [it was] very good.

Different lady made, my brother's wife, she makes everything. Moccasin, beaver mitts, and moccasin. She [made] good moccasin[s]. I remember that. She died a long time ago. She's not living [anymore]. I miss her. I liked to watch her sow. She [was] always sowing. They kept moose, she work[ed] on moose hide too. She [was] tying it. She was real[ly] good. [But it was] a lot of work.

We [did not have a] chainsaw just used [an] old swede saw. Put a log on a sawhorse and start[ed] cutting away. Good way to keep in shape I guess. Anyway after I moved to Telida that was my first year of trapping, so I had to have my brothers teach me how, and then my mom was there, so we would run a short little line like 4 [or] 5 miles.

The one thing I always tell my boys is [to] help those in need. My son down in Anvik, he was telling me he was doing laundry at the laundry mat, and this lady forgot her quarters, and he said he went over and handed her quarters, and [she looked at my son and asked] what are you doing? That is something I learned from my dad. Like what? Help those in need, and he walked off.... But I always tell them [to] help those in need, go ahead and do it. I learned that [from] my mom. [She] used to explain [to me]. [She] taught me [to care for people]. So that is what I'm trying to pass on down to my kids.

Life is what it is, you know. I mean you have to enjoy being out here. Still a lot of things I'd like to do with my kids, and that is why I wanted to go to Telida and take [my son] with me and teach him everything I know.

The importance of preserving Athabascan traditional values of respecting elders and living off the land was also a strong element among participants in regards to knowledge sharing.

I'm so glad we do have tradition out here. And passing down tradition. I'm hoping [my son will] carry [it] on too. So far he loves boating. He just falls asleep to the sound of the motor. So cute. And snowmachine[ing]. We took him on a snowmachine ride Nikolai to Telida by snowmachine, and that is 3-hour drive, and it was fun.

I worry about my family. Or other people. It is just soft hearted I guess. I love people. It doesn't matter who it is. It is just the way I was raised.

All [my family is] down there. [I'm the only one who] moved up. My brother died, my real brother. I have...one more brother. He [has a] mother [who is] still alive [in] Aniak. There, life is different, way back, [compared] to today. Today I talk to lots of young guys [and ask] how are you, good morning, talk to them [really] nice because I'm second chief. [I talk about] church, try to [tell them] how I grew up [and how to] behave [and have a] better life. [Not to]... talk back to elders or [their] dad, gramps, or next door neighbor, treat them just like one people. One man. And that is the way you [can] live [a] better [life].

For me it, I think it takes a long time to be able to watch and learn. Usually from what I hear in Athabaskan, [you should] sit back and watch and then ask questions. For me it is just when I'm out with [my partner] I keep it in my head when I watch him he does [everything] so fast and hoping I can be able to do the same things when the years go by and be able to actually do something.

I try to pass around from generation ...like [to] your kids maybe, your grandkids, and from there it go[es to] another one and from 40 years from today somebody will talk about you, [hear] the story, see what you did in Nikolai [and] why you ask[ed] these people questions, and [then] they [will] give you stories to talk about to your kids [for a] different generation. [In] forty years [we] might be six feet down, [but] those people [will still be] talking about us.

Individuals expressed urgency in sharing, passing down information to their children to keep traditional knowledge from being lost.

I cannot pass on that information and their father was Caucasian, so, no, he doesn't live here anymore, and now he has no desire to come back. Usually [teaching] was left up to the uncles to teach traditionally, but we lost that the same time that, we lost like the connection with all these men, their uncles, and the school and stuff, so I do not know.

I want to learn because that is one of our traditions I think. It is got to be one of our traditional values I guess. And though pretty soon these old folks won't be around....they're getting really old. I hope my dad teaches [traditions to] me soon. Our fish [have] been declining lately, and I'm really missing [fish], wanting to dry fish and was excited when the village council got that grant to build that fish wheel and the smoke house down there because I really wanted to try to do something like this...I want them to know that this is really important in how our people used to live off this land here as we never bought like, tuna at the store or anything like that. We have always preserved our own.

I think it is for my sons too because they are teaching [my granddaughter] to hunt,

to learn how to hunt, shoot an animal, [and] how to take care of it. Berries. I want her to know because it is disappearing, you know. I want her to know what my sons know, [but] who is going to teach her?

Main Theme: Tradition/Historical

Tradition was spoken of as being integral to an individual's lifestyle, history, and knowledge of wildlife and activity in the surrounding area. Traditional activities included connections to the past on a generational level with Athabascan activities that had longstanding history in the area. Additionally, longstanding Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) of wildlife included proper respect for game animals and the communities' involvement with dog mushing. Behavior towards wildlife and nature was also spoken of as traditional within the community of Nikolai.

It used to be when we when you first see [a black bear], like when you are boat riding, and you spot a black bear looking at you and you are pointing it out to your captain or other people that is in the boat, they used to tell me you do not point at it. When you point at it that is when it takes off.

They used to tell me do not ever go in a bear den. You'll fall asleep in there [and not] wake up until spring. And that is what they used to tell me.

Reason[s] why I like to going hunting [is] because I'm quiet. That is how the men used to hunt by themselves. I mean they were master woodsman back then. They were quiet. They would sneak up on them moose. And moose have big huge ears. It is pretty hard to do.

Connections to activities in participant's past was mentioned. Generally these activities included trapping, hunting, and fishing in the area that the participant had conducted during their lifetime, but also included changes in the social makeup of the family and snowmobile use removing the need for dogs as work tools.

I'm going to probably start a dog team. I think that there needs to be dog mushing here just because it is on the Iditarod Trail, and we see dog teams every year, and I think it will be good for the people to get started back into that lifestyle again. Because the gas prices [are] so high and you can get places pretty fast with a dog team if you have the right dogs, and so I'm thinking I want to start teaching the

kids how to do dog mushing.

But not for work. Everybody had dog teams when I first moved [to Nikolai]. Go [out on my] trapline, cut wood, [and] go to [the] next village [of] Telida. Dog teams for all [back then], but snowmachines change[d a] lot of things. [Now you can] go like hell. [In] 1 hour you might [be] in McGrath. [With] dog teams [it might take] 6 hours, 7 maybe.

It is the first year I've actually even tried to build a fish wheel, but I guess it is more of a dog food thing. Or if you are not, depends on what you catch I guess because we eat it too. I do not know too much about fish wheel[s]. It used to be pretty big. But now not so much anymore. A lot of the people that just go out and set a net and go check it like every day. I've always been [interested in a] rod and reel.

At one point I think, because I used to do vaccinations, rabies vaccine and distemper vaccine for the dogs. The last time I was vaccinating I think I did 800 dogs to the village of, there is like a hundred people still here, and 800 dogs, so that is how [many] dogs there [were].

I used to travel go to Medfra shopping, go take a ride to Salmon River. Go about 50 miles [of] trapline [and] stay out there [for] 1 month. I had lots of dogs [back then].

In addition to traditional reliance on dog teams, participants mentioned their connections to fish camp as integral to their lives.

I mean it was fun at times. I remember the big gardens we used to help plant and take care of. But just recently I had fun going over to Salmon River at that fish camp there that [the Village Council] had and that was fun. I had not gone over in like 30 years.

We used to have [a] fish wheel in Medfra when I first moved. But today I cannot do much work. I can use [a] net. Cook [the fish], [but] I use [a] net [and] drift.

Sometimes when [the caribou] migrated through here, in the flats, and same thing happened to Telida one year, we used to go out and hunt for them during that time.

Alcohol was mentioned as having a negative impact on living a traditional lifestyle and holding to Athabascan values.

[Life is] better every day for me. [It is] quiet. No [more] alcohol. That is one thing I'm happy [about]. Yes [now is] better than [a] long time ago.

He had more like a traditional camp. I mean there was no alcohol. There was nothing like that.

One individual mentioned the importance of eating native foods, such as moose and fish that was common fare since childhood.

Probably food. Native food. I cannot stand that beef for too long. For a little while yes I could eat it, but I get tired of it.

Russian Orthodox traditions were mentioned during the interviews as being a large part of the community celebrations in addition to the impact Russian theology had on the social relationships between individuals.

That is when the boom started. They sent out ministries throughout Alaska and for out here they carried on the traditions and the icons that you see around here. [They have] been up way before I was born. They [have] been sitting there for a long time. Even the icon, right above you. It is really important too because those traditions [were] passed down before I was born. And the problem also is [getting] a priest to actually stay [in the village] and that is kind of hard right now. There was a priest that was here, I forgot what year, it was in 09 or 08...He was here for a year and then he took off.

For [Russian] New Years that you do what everybody [does] is get their guns and shoot outside. The elders, [they say] it was passed down...when you do that you are scaring off the demons and when you do that before you go out there and shoot your gun you place every icon towards the window and you close your curtain because they say demons will come up to your window and look [inside]. And they can easily get in if you do not have an icon sitting at your window. And that is scary. I do that every year. I'm so superstitious too.

During the Russian times I, my mother was telling me that before the Russians came and before religion people used to fight among each other. I think they have Ray Collins wrote the history of Nikolai, Telida. And I was reading that and there was one that was that said he had an arrow in his leg or something during the fighting. And my mom was telling me that all that stopped when the religion came, [the Russian] Orthodox. So everything stopped. Start[ed] having more respect for each other. No more fighting. So I think that is one of the reasons why it is important. They have more respect for each other.

I do not go to church because I think that people need to live by example, and I think that if they were going to be preaching at the church then they shouldn't be laying on the ground drunk outside or bad mouthing each other or something like that, so I really have to be careful. I remember when I used to go to church all the

time, and it was really good to go to church, but now I do not go anymore.

Subtheme: Time in the Area

The amount of time participants spent in a place and their involvement with the land through work and subsistence was mentioned. Times, dates, and years were used to reference their connection to Nikolai and the surrounding area.

61 [years I have been living in Nikolai]. It is my home.

I grew up in McGrath for 8 years. Then moved up here about [for about] 9. I think it was like 1999 when I moved up here. And I've lived here ever since.

I worked at the park. I did trail work. Moved the ground around. I am a fire fighter, but I never fire fought in Denali National Park. We were camped out there like for a month or whatever. We got to go hiking. It was pretty awesome.

[It is] beautiful country. There was another school [in Nikolai] when I first started. But before they buil[t] this I was [the] maintenance man. I work[ed a] long time. That is why I retired.

Loss of tradition, specifically language, was shown to be a concern due to the influence of outside culture in the form of school infrastructure and management of hunting activities.

[I value] especially right now because I [have] been gone or our language and our culture and after we're gone, my generation, and all that stuff, language and everything will come with us, there'll be no more. The only thing that would be left behind would be what they have in school, those [traditions] written down....the rest of it will be lost.

I think we lost that. I think it has to do with the school and how people were sent to boarding school, and they didn't make that connection with their family when they got back because they were told not to [speak] their language, and they were... punished severely for speaking in their own language....And I think that we lost our pride...as far as the men. I think that that is something we need to focus on because healing is not going to come outside. It is going to come from within, so, I think that is something that we need to really look and see what we can do to change.

Personal concern, about how we're losing our traditions so quickly is that some of the places where our ancestors used to hunt I think that we're losing that. Now that is my concern. Like the trails that they used have to go up into the hills and the places that they used to hunt, I think that there might be cabins up there now.

I've lived in Nikolai 50 years. That is how old I am. And I'm single. I was born here in Nikolai and I speak my Athabascan language fluently. One of the last few, last of the 30 or 40 people that know how to speak it. Maybe not even that.

In contrast, one woman mentioned positive changes taking place within her family regarding gender roles and a reconstructing of associated activities for males and females within the home.

I remember one time right when [my daughter] was a little girl and my husband decided to wash dishes. He was washing dishes, [and she said], Papa, you are not supposed to wash dishes! But see things were changing then. I never saw men washing dishes when I was growing up.

One individual spoke frequently of Nikolai community history and the historical knowledge of the Upper Kuskokwim Athabascan people.

Because I think [our ancestors] used to store a lot in the hills around at salmon river and like dig a hole and then they line the whole thing with birch or birch bark, and then stored [food] in there until they... dug it out, dug it up. Because there is a lot of those holes all over those hills over there.

I think that that it is also traditional. It is our tradition to be able to go out and harvest animals.

When you think about it, those people are real tough people. I mean they didn't have anything. Nothing like what we have right now. We have axe and everything they [had] nothing. No knife, nothing. I do not know how the hell they survived.

Back in the day they used to go [into the park to hunt]. Only time we could get Dall's sheep is during the winter because it cost too much to fly Alaska Range....because we used to eat nothing but Dall's sheep and black bear and caribou about a 100 to a 150 years ago because there was[n't] moose around here. So Dall's sheep and caribou [are] pretty important to us.

I go do a lot [of] subsistence net site down at Black Water. My family [has] for the last 100 years or so. Then we used that site quite a bit. We're the first ones on the Upper Kuskokwim to get a salmon. My dad is.

That used to be our hunting area all the way from Kantishna all the way down to

Big River, the Upper Kuskokwim people. We had big hunting area.

A long time ago people used to always like move to different places, and they never settled in Nikolai. They just like, if they were up towards Telida then that is where they would spend the winter. If they were down river, then they would stay down there. There was[n't a] town. It is like some of the people that are buried somewhere out in the woods those kind of things [are what] I want to know. I know they have my dad's uncles and stuff are buried out there by Salmon River. We do not know where. So, yeah, those are the kind of things I want to know.

Nikolai was one of the last villages to be...associate[d] with the White culture. They knew that White people were looking for gold, and they knew where gold was, but the chief said [he] had a feeling, and the chief said they didn't want to have [anything] to do with [the] gold, so they never even told them where to go. [Because] all they do is bring death to our people and disease.

They changed. McGrath used to have their own hunting area borderline. After the chiefs passed away like Miskeafan and Pete Gregory, out in McGrath people started coming into our hunting area, our traditional hunting area like North Fork, and we had issues [with] that because Big River was the borderline. We do not go down to McGrath and get your moose, so why are you coming over to Nikolai hunting area? We have enough difficult time[s] as it is, and then they come over and just rape and run. Just grab our moose and take off.

All the people around here. The whole Nikolai, Upper Kuskokwim band. They used to make skin boats up there by Coast, Big Walk. Right now, this time of year after they're done with Salmon River they would walk over to, up to the mountains. They would leave the young and elderly [at] home, the nursing mothers and then just take the women, like some young women, along with them that [were] healthy enough to walk. So they could help them preserve meat, cut up meat, and they would sow the skin boat....They would dry the meat, and then they would float back down to Nikolai. So Nikolai's been moved twice within the last 30 years or so. 100 to a 120 years ago.

...pretty cool back in the day they used to have a Russian trading post down by Sleetmute. Those Sleetmute people say they could hear the Upper Kuskokwim people coming from 6 miles away. Yeah they would be singing their marching song, that way they know what those downriver people would know that Nikolai people have peaceful intentions...because they used to fight each other over hunting grounds and [the] rock quarry.

So a long time they used to preserve salmon over at Salmon River and up Tolsona in a little pit. They would build underground pits. They would line [the pit] with birch bark, and then they would put whole salmon in there and preserve it. They would layer it with fireweed. There is some kind of acid or preservative in the fireweed. And then they would put mud over it and moss. And they would make

some kind of structure. The women would carry the mud to the river and dump it in the river so that the other bears and other human beings from different area wouldn't go raid it. It is the same old story, like hundreds of years we'd be fighting over women and hunting areas and all that good stuff.

Main Theme: Economics

Rural communities within Alaska are unique due to their location and the isolation experienced in regards to the lack of road access for most communities. Therefore, the human populations are often low in number and employment difficult to find due to a lack of local resources. Work is often seasonal and can include firefighting, guiding, fishing, and construction. The remote nature of Nikolai was no exception. Due to the lack of employment, Nikolai residents were often employed in several occupations in the course of a year. Summer was generally construction, mining, and firefighting; in the fall guiding; followed by trapping during the winter months. Year-round employment involved positions at the local school, Tribal council, and city, though these positions were difficult to obtain due to their low availability. Due to the remote nature of Nikolai and the lack of road access, food, mail, and other necessities were brought daily by plane. The costs associated with shipping items by plane are high. Nikolai participants frequently mentioned the high costs associated with living rurally. These costs involved the lack of employment, consistent or seasonal, and the costs of living in a remote location. Individuals mentioned the financial changes that came to Nikolai with the introduction of the snow machine. Individuals who were once reliant on dog mushing for winter transportation switched to the use of dogs. The introduction of snow machines not only removed the need for a large salmon harvest required to feed dogs, but also furthered their reliance on a cash economy versus subsistence.

Subtheme: Diverse Income

I think it was in the 60s that my husband took a snow machine that was [the] skidoo. It was important, after people stopped having dog teams and they started using snow machines, and the only way to afford one was to go fire-fighting in the summer [and] get [a] big chunk of money, enough to buy a snow machine. I used to do that too. Go fire-fighting. [It] was fun.

I worked mostly in the school as the language instructor. I taught our language in [the] school and work[ed] in the post office. And then we had the little cafe out in the city building couple years back. Me and my husband we used to have a cafe there. And then we have a store. And one time when I was working at school I thought, ughhh, I'm tired of this, I'm going to change jobs, so I applied to be a health aid and they picked me too... Yeah so. Fire-fighting I did that.

What do you mean why do people stay in Nikolai? That is our home! Why do you stay where you stay? Economics I think; [there is] no money. You get money for running around. People [here] do not have jobs.

Moneys [is] always an issue out here. We're not so much greedy, we're just worried about [if] we have enough or not enough.

Subtheme: Supplementing Income with Subsistence

One individual mentioned the inability to live fully reliant on subsistence due to cultural changes and the low prices associated with fur trapping. The need for a combined subsistence-cash economy was evident in the data.

Long time ago our ancestors used to migrate [around] looking for good hunting areas. Nowadays that is what [the] younger folks are doing. We're migrating away from Nikolai to go find where there is work available. To live. I mean it is a cash economy. Trapping does not cut it no more. That is why we need all the moose that we can get, moose, caribou, and Dall's sheep.

So now you cannot afford to trap if you do not have [a] snow machine. So a lot of people have old snow machines. Snow machine landed in McGrath costs about 12,000 dollars. I mean it is ridiculous. So people hang onto their snowmachines all the time and just buy parts. And trapping, it costs money to go trapping. But trapping might be good this year.

So they have [a] fish wheel and fish net, but there used to be a lot of dog teams back here in the very beginning but not anymore. It is too expensive. I mean dogs

are expensive.

Sometimes I tell these guys those days were the best days of my life. You know. Even though it was hard, hard life, hard living, [those] were the best days... of my life. Because right now, even though I make more money it costs more. Those days I only make a little bit [of] money. But I live off the land. Now, I make more money and I spend it.

For [my partner] he'd rather make profit out of it. Every year the trapping is different, I mean the prices for martin was really sky high and for wolf it was still about the same price, 200, 300 dollars, and it all depends on who you go through too. His dad sent this wolf skin to Fairbanks and he got 230 for it. It would help out a lot. And his dad, he's wanted to send out bullets, cigarettes, and I forgot what else he sent him in the spring.

Subtheme: High Costs Associated with Living Rurally

The benefits of staying in Nikolai resulted in more cost-effective housing for individuals who were able to live with relatives such as parents, grandparents, or extended family. Individuals spoke about the high cost of living in larger cities and the issues with younger families being able to support themselves without the aid of family.

I wish there was more opportunity out here, and you know also on top of that is pricing is a problem too. If I did have a lot of money, hell, I'd build a freaking apartment complex. I'd be the landlord. I would. And, that is what I would do especially help out the young parents out there you know, to get them on their feet.

Cost of living is pretty high. I lived in Anchorage for a few years, and it was just too much for me.

The high price of fuel in rural communities was frequently mentioned. In a community that relied upon gasoline for travel by boat on the river or over land via four-wheelers and snow machine, participants often mentioned the high cost of purchasing fuel that was flown in. While I was present collecting data, fuel prices were upwards of \$7.50 a gallon. Individuals often pooled resources during the hunting season where several individuals

contributed to the fuel costs and combined their resources. The urgency of planning ahead with other hunters was mentioned.

Everybody's pretty much based in the town. It has everything here that you'd need but the gas prices now are pretty intense. Usually plan ahead pretty good [for] any kind of trip.

In the fall time everybody finds a way [to get] enough for the gas to go hunting. Usually pool with somebody or something like that. Get some of the, but the rest of the year it is pretty just, there is few people that you know, are working that can afford it.

Main Theme: Health

Issues pertaining to health and the changes to outdoor lifestyles were lamented as having a deep effect on the community of Nikolai. The introduction of non-Native foods to the community has changed the dependence on traditional foods—often with negative outcomes as mentioned by participants. During the study, the researcher visited two of the three stores in the community. The shelves were stocked with soda and processed foods. No vegetables or fruit were sold. One individual noted the dietary changes from “Native foods” of game meat and harvested plants to store-purchased products. Individuals mentioned the negative effects processed foods were having on their personal health as well as the health of the general community.

Subtheme: Subsistence Foods Are Healthier

I used to weigh about 268 pounds about February of 2011. Now I weigh 200. That is from [eating] marrow bone. I reversed my diabetes. I do not eat canned fruit anymore. I stay away from Pilot bread and white bread and just try to eat a whole bunch of antioxidant foods like blueberries. I try to eat fish too quite a bit. That is where you get your protein from.

It is good to have garden too. You have food [and it is] more healthy.

The women used to do that a long time ago. Have a stash down there. That is where they get their vitamins from. That is why people used to go blind back in the day, the old Natives, [from the] lack of vitamins. If it [was] a bad berry crop, then you cannot get [any] berries...oh we used to get wild carrots and wild potatoes too. Wild carrots. Some kind of plant. After the first frost is when we pick[ed] them.

Concern was expressed not only for the individual, but for others who lived in the community who were also suffering health-wise from a lack of exercise and a poor diet. Children were viewed as unhealthy compared to generations prior who spent more time outside and whose main diets consisted largely of subsistence foods.

I'm concerned about people [in the village] getting cancer too. I mean [in] my generation, a lot of people [are] getting cancer within the last 100 years [because] our diets have changed drastically and [as well as] our exercise. That has something to do with it.

I see a lot of health issues with the kids growing up [here]. Some of them do not [get] enough exercise. They are overweight and obese. When we were kids we were skinny. We did not have [anything] to eat hardly. Mostly [we had] our Native foods [that] we used to eat back in the late 60s and early 70s.

Summary of Nikolai

Several main data themes resulted from the Nikolai interviews. First, community was often mentioned by all participants as being important for sharing purposes between families, elders, and neighbors. Helping others in the community, sending youth to chop wood or clean a home, was mentioned. Concern for youth, particularly the life choices, was mentioned. Additionally, the general socializing amongst friends while hunting, fishing, harvesting, or telling stories around town was an important facet of the community. Family was the second theme mentioned, generally through husband/wife relationships and the importance of passing knowledge to children, generally traditional Athabascan knowledge and history of the area. Ancestral connections, such as

remembering where one came from in the area, had value to participants. Spending time caring for family, such as children, parents, or grandparents, as well as spending time together as a family outdoors was frequently mentioned. Third, tradition was deeply important to participants. This included treatment of game while hunting, knowledge of Athabascan activities and people, historical changes relating to fish camps and dog mushing as well as the cultural ties to Russian Orthodox history in the area. Loss of tradition was mentioned, particularly in connection to the school that changed the nomadic nature of the community. Fourth, the economy and costs associated with living in Nikolai revealed a dual-dependence on subsistence as well as employment. However, a lack of jobs, especially consistent positions, in a place where fuel and food costs were high, was especially relevant to participants. Lastly, health and the importance of subsistence foods in relation to outside foods was mentioned. In particular, the issues youth in the community were facing in regards to obesity issues was considered troubling.

Lake Minchumina

Data Themes

Understanding the historical, environmental, and demographical information of the Lake Minchumina community provides insight into the data themes as they pertain to this research. The salient themes repeated throughout the interviews while in Lake Minchumina reveal a deep connectedness to place as a means for community, self-reliance, freedom, and solitude. Themes involving community, family, freedom as a lifestyle, economics, and health will be discussed in the following sections.

Main Theme: Community Connectedness

Themes involving community connectedness were mentioned often during the interviews collected from individuals living in Lake Minchumina. Sharing resources was a particularly common activity in the rural community where items were both difficult and expensive to obtain.

Subtheme: Sharing of Resources

... I'm saying a big part of subsistence is sharing and we've never not gotten a moose without having somebody give us moose meat.

I mean if they got water, you can get water easy, but you got to carry it, you are not going to get anybody to deliver water to you, for blood or money. You are going [t] have to get your own water, just like you are going to have to get your own wood, but they'll let you have the water, if they have it, if they have a spring or a well or something they'll let you have it. They are not going [to] bring it to you.

...how to then make it stretch and talk between us if someone has extra dog food instead of hoarding it they are going to say, well okay, I've got extra this if you need, I can share a bag or two here...

In general we are stocked up. And we plan that that is a possibility. Yeah, or we ask each other, we always have that odd thing that you can ask if you need something because people usually have a case of it or nothing. And if they do, they are willing to share...

Not much borrowing really mostly if somebody has something you need they'll give it to you, or I'll give it to him and replace if I'll trade him for something else. We all go together and get a fuel haul flown in so that there is not this additional cost of someone else who gets it in and then charges another fee to sell it to you.

So, and that is not something unusual that cannot be done anywhere, and but it does take, take those elements of responsibility and trust, and you have to have, you know, one person responsible, and they have to be willing to do that and get all the money together at the same time.

See we used to like as a whole community once a year, at least once a year sometimes twice a year we'd have a DC six come in, and it would have building materials, dog food, for the twins and all this stuff, but there is not that many

people now, and no one's building, so there is most of the stuff that comes in now is in the mail plane.

We're definitely a part of the community. We're probably the most distant people who are a part of the community, but we're in some ways quite independent from other people but in other ways very dependent on them, and we certainly count on the post office and the airstrip over there, and we count on [our friend in the community] to run the post office and [our other friend in the community] or whoever keeping that runway maintained because that is our lifeline, and even though we do not like to depend on the outer world we really do...

Subtheme: Sharing of Knowledge

Knowledge sharing in regards to education of youth and newcomers to the area was also an important theme.

It is mostly a challenge in that there doesn't seem to be anybody left to educate. There are not many people who really want to engage in subsistence. They would rather be working for money than working for food I think. Yeah. We spent huge amounts of time just growing, getting, harvesting, for processing food. And, most people do not really want to do that it seems like. And most people, they are fine coming out and visiting the bush, but they do not really want to live here. It doesn't have the things in life that they want.

...and that is what we've started to do is mentioning to other people with families that have come here. They know how to build a fire? You know, teach them, oh, I had not thought of that, though the parents are capable of that, they just do not think of all these life skills and these things...

Both of the boys had been given knives, well the one little one he just started slashing, I mean you had to stop him, and he cut himself right away. And I was like, okay, slow down, here, you need to know he was enthusiastic. He had that where the other one was kind of more standoffish and kind of squeamish about it, but he was interested in observing and seeing so, and each kid is a challenge and interesting because you have to work at them with where they are. You cannot just assume, you know, and so you cannot squash that one and make him then feel like he was, you know, not doing something valuable and not want, and you cannot belittle the other ones so that then he doesn't come in. You have to try and pull the other one in and find what he might be interested in and come to want to bring them both to a place where they can work with this and utilize it for their good. You know, and so we skinned that all out, took it home and, and used the meat, and then they ended up getting it tanned...

I feel like welcoming those who need what this place has to offer or who are interested in and can see the value of here then I feel real pleasure in sharing it. And, and it in enjoy them, helping them see broader the value in what is here.

...she got reviews like they thought... this is like going to a third world country, and, for what, and they wanted to spend, they just spent a day at the park, and they wished they would spent more time there and was here for 3 days, and she thought they would be going out and doing things. She was upset because they wouldn't go out and do stuff and they just wanted to be, but her experience and what she wants people to experience is different than mine. To her, this is an educational opportunity, and she wants them to learn something.

I know who I can really count on. I'll go to Penny for gardening advice and I'll go for Lisa if I want to know thing, Charlie if my boat motors broken, and Ray Wildert has helped us use the compressor to pump up flat airplane tires, or everybody's got their talents and seem to share really willingly.

...we didn't even really talk to the older trappers because we were young and you are really just too shy. Plus the right questions to ask, so we picked up some from them, but an awful lot of stuff we just learned ourselves. While the Natives, they just have all that cultural knowledge. And a lot of that is going to be lost if some of the kids do not start picking it up.

Yeah, so, like a lot of things, I've been doing this for pretty much full time for over 30 years, and I'm still learning stuff all the time. And things you wouldn't even think of, and when we were in our twenties there was another trapper, Leonard Minki, and he trapped for decades, and he always put a lot of thought into stuff, and he didn't have very much schooling, but he knew more about the stuff we were interested in than, than any college professor...

Subtheme: Friendship

Socializing, spending time together in friendship, and pulling together in times of need was also mentioned.

There are the occasional exceptions, but for the most part we've been pretty stable, and they'll be spats between community members, and if you are going to live in the bush, you have to be really strong minded, and so when there is a clash it can sometimes blow up all out of proportion. But then, if there is something that, that threatens the community as a whole, like a proposed road, or the forest fire, everybody pulls together, so that is always been really nice.

Just meeting people, seeing what's going on. Hopefully I meet them on the trail and stuff. Most everybody does. Stops and talks. Mainly about the weather, about

what we're doing, what we're going to do and what we want to do. We can borrow something, or loan something out to help somebody.

But [visitors] usually are surprised themselves at the connectedness [of the people]. And I think it is just that they do not get that much of focus of it and attention somewhere else where they go...that being able to connect to the people. And we like the people. It is a nice community you know. Some of the communities are not as nice as here.

Subtheme: Like-Mindedness/Sharing in Similar Mindsets

Lifestyle mentality was mentioned by one resident as having a unique strength in Lake Minchumina.

Two years later in 1991 we had this big fire, and it overrun everything and was going to burn us out and then, the BLM I guess it was or somebody, they sent an airplane out there going to evacuate the community. And at that time there was probably 35 people here. And they brought an old DC 3 in here, and there was a Native pilot flying it. Anyway, and they got out here, and nobody would leave. And, and whoever the guy was, he turns to the BLM official, and he says "I told you this was a waste of time. I knew these people would never leave. They have got that great big lake out there and no fires going to run them off" And he gets back in his plane disgusted, and he went back to town. Nobody left... well, we weren't going to give up.

As far as the geography of the community, we're spread out around the lake people check with each other and see what they need or what they're doing and share, or if we become older just to help each other to butcher that moose, and that is something that can be done in other places, and we do some unusual things here that I, we do not really know isn't done, except for its that same thing. You've got to trust each other, be able to have that cohesiveness.

We're going about our life, yeah, I would think, sort of the salt of the earth type thing there.

To me it is more of traditional lifestyle. I like to think in terms of traditional lifestyle. So, for some people a garden is subsistence or traditional lifestyle, but for a lot of people they do not have gardens, but they still live a fairly subsistence lifestyle. Carol doesn't have much of a garden, but she eats all kinds of lamb's quarters and colts foot and all kinds of things that most people consider weeds, and that is her garden!

A loss of community was mentioned due to youth growing up and leaving, which

contributed to the shrinking numbers of Lake Minchumina's population.

The one Native family in the community left and they had five kids. And so, and then the other kids that were here were graduating so pretty soon there was only a few kids left. And they closed the school. We tried to change it into a distance learning center and some other stuff, but it didn't work out. So once that closed then it is like, that kind of discouraged anybody else from moving in here. And like Lisa was saying, that a lot of the lands tied up. There is, there is not that much private land anyway.

So actually the rural populations here and elsewhere have been declining for the last 10 years. Children grow up and leave because there is no economic base for them to stay, and population of the people that is out here just keeps getting older. Which was, when I came here it was all older people.

Yeah, and these days, kids grow up and then leave the community. And that is happened here. There is, since I've been here, every kid that is grown up out here, since we did, has left. And that is probably because they do not have the financial resources or the work out here, or they just want something different. They have done this then I need something different. And I do not have a problem with people doing what's right for them, but it is just a shame that all this stuff in 30 years people won't know how to tell male martin from female martin tracks.

And so we do not know what the future holds, whether we just all dry up and blow away or, or figure out some way for young people to come back. In the villages it is the same thing. They leave and there is nothing. Their populations are going down. Schools are closing.

One resident mentioned the restorative elements of both the community and the natural environment as playing a large part of her cancer recovery.

I like spending time and having that to really study a subject whether it is a flower or whether it is a plant to take photographs and those kinds of things takes, take room and space. And not to be interrupted or disturbed, and it is a place of relaxing and renewal and of healing. I think it has played a big part in my cancer surviving. I think the nurturing of the community as well as the environment and what we have here is a positive thing.

Main Theme: Economics

The rural nature of Lake Minchumina contributed to the difficulty of transportation to and from larger communities as well as shipment of resources.

Therefore, residents expressed a lack of consistent employment and a strong dependence on local subsistence resources to supplement their food and lifestyle needs.

Subtheme: Supplementing Income with Subsistence

I try not to have to bring in, what is the sense of gardening if you have to buy potted soil, fertilizer, and all this stuff? There is natural peat that is along the edge of the lake it comes up with the waves and there is all this thatch around the lake, but not on my beach but on other beaches that you can collect. So there is ways to live without having to buy things from the store.

And that would be true of all your oil and gas and all that, so for me it is easier to use less than to haul four times as many 55 gallon drums, which doesn't, we cannot haul 55 gallon drums up the hill even in the winter with the snowmachine you have to make it 30 gallons. You have to pump out half of the drum, make two drums, so it is a lot of extra handling of things, and that is why the prices are so much more. Anytime you handle things more the price goes up.

I just think of saving from buying it at the store. I am not really saving any money or time or anything. I spent 2 weeks getting the garden planted, and I probably should have been doing other things. Building stuff while I could. Always wondering if it is worthwhile, always feeling that feeling is, well what am I doing this for? Because I could, if I only had a good job and enough money to ship it here I could buy it, have it sent in even if I didn't buy, you know, even if I was buying food I could still buy produce, fresh produce, and have it shipped in. It is not impossible to do.

Subtheme: High Costs Associated with Living Rurally

One individual mentioned a lack of interest in employment but for completion of a task for enjoyment in itself. Other individuals mentioned that despite the high costs of living in a rural community, the lifestyle was worth the cost.

We have an approved septic system. You have to have it approved by the borough before they cover it. I thought well geez, I do not really want to pay that 7500 dollars for nothing, and that was one more reason that I just kind of wanted to get out of there and, so that is what we did. We sold the place and came out here.

...see when I lived way remote and was raising my family, I had no telephone

contact. We went to town once every 6 months so the mail, you know I did not have to answer mail every week, didn't have any bills to worry about. Well I still do not have any bills, two bills, two bills is all I have. A telephone bill and my modem, my Starband bill. And then, finding time for email is just, how can I justifiably sit down to emails when I have not filled the wood box, have not done my water, and I have gardening, bagging, and berries bagging, I was brought up where you just didn't do those sit down things until the other things were done.

It seems to me that people will want to see you do things but they want to see you get money for doing them as opposed to just doing them for nothing. But again I'm different. I do not really care about the money I just want to be doing something. So that is where I differ. I'll do it just for something to do and enjoy doing it....

When I first got here 2 years ago, I couldn't buy any firewood. There is no firewood here for sale. You gotta cut your own firewood and spend the time doing it.

I think my economic situation is determined that I'm going to be staying here. And the money in Montana too, its expensive there. Not to get away from people. It is just, for me, it is cheaper. Other people it may not be that way. I lived in Salcha, it cost more to live in Salcha than in Fairbanks. Especially after gas, that was before gas prices jumped up too, was like 40 miles come out on a 100 dollars on your tank every day. What kind of job could you have in town for 8 or 10 bucks now, go flip McDonalds burgers? It is not going to work. I'm better here than I am in Salcha.

It costs a lot to live in the bush. You know. There is a lot of things you can save money on, but then everything else, you know, is double. Sometimes triple.

Not, not, not really. We were financially worse off when we moved out here then we were in town. We've made do pretty well in town.

Had these couple of guys out here was going to really cash in on them. They wanted to hire everybody here to pick mushrooms, and she said, I'll pick mushrooms after I get mine. After I get all I want maybe I'll pick mushrooms for ya.

Subtheme: Diverse Income

The lifestyle of mixed-subsistence/cash and seasonal work as a lifestyle was frequently mentioned. Individuals often held several positions throughout the year, were

self-employed, and always found ways to supplement their income through various means.

...our folks said, you guys are doing the garden. And you are getting the moose. And anytime we want to fish, you run and get it, and then we will pay for the other groceries. And we won't charge you rent. So, in a sense we were working for them in trade for our room and part of our board. So our expenses were really reduced and then by the time they retired and moved into Fairbanks we were much better established and selling pretty much making as much money as we had time to invest in sowing or writing or trapping or anything like that.

Ray and Stella moved out here in the late 70s, mid or late 70s, and Ray traps and he's also a handyman, helps out at the power plant, and anything that needs doing he can do it. And they have really enjoyed living out here, and they are very frugal.

And isn't that fun you do not know for sure what you are catching. That is kind of the way with trapping when you go to a place. Plus you can make some money at it too. Especially with the prices here in the last few years. They're pretty good. They went way up.

[Trapping] is our whole economic base in the winter.

A culture of hard-work ethic was present in one individual who frequently mentioned her cultural aptitude towards work.

I guess I think this is the Germanic part of me, I think if you do not take care of the basic needs, then the survival of the fittest, then if you do not survive winter it is your own fault. If you have struggles and if you have to go out and start your chainsaw at 40 below because you ran out of wood, maybe then you were like the grasshopper and the ant. The grasshopper, he just played all summer. So you have to have a balance between playing and working, and I probably am a workaholic.

The differences between living in town where resources were more abundant was mentioned in contrast to Lake Minchumina where resources were obtained through subsistence effort.

We happen to be out here in a rural community, so we deal with what we need to, growing gardens and hunting, picking berries. Living closer to the land is cheaper and it's closer for us to do, and so it is natural to do, and it saves costs, where in town that might be thought of differently. People look at resources that are in town for them to take advantage of.

Well you hunted because you had to have the food. Fish because you had to have, eat the fish. Grew a garden because you had to have the food. Well it, you know if you want decent food you gotta grow it. You know you can buy it. You can get stuff out here from Fairbanks, but it is costly. Plus it doesn't taste that good.

When you have to pay for and haul your gas in and fly it in, you are looking for something that is economical on gas for the distance and yeah, that you do not have to haul so much out. Because that all has to be deducted from what you are doing...

Subtheme: High Costs Associated with Living Rurally

Discouragement was expressed regarding the conflict between living a rural subsistence lifestyle and the need for traditional employment and monetary income in today's world.

I used to trap a long time ago. But my trapping area is way over there, and I tend to work in the winter, and that is when trapping is so, it is just not worth doing, but by the time you've got your traps out, then you have to go and pull them up again because you have to go to work.

I can see where even when people are way out in the rural, if things got extremely tight if there isn't some sort of rural preference, I mean your ability you do not necessarily have the income to go to town or to purchase meat or to purchase that stuff and get it shipped out here. It is 75 cents a pound we pay for that, and mail is even higher. And a dollar pound a lot of things because of it being cubed. So long ago it was like six cents or eight cents. Things have just escalated.

I like moose, and meat's pretty darn expensive in town. Especially by the time you get it out here and...we do...buy pork and chicken in town. We rarely buy any beef. Any yearling's pretty good eating or pretty tender.

Main Theme: Tradition/History

Participants interviewed at Lake Minchumina were generally older and had spent much, if not all of their lives, living in the community. Therefore individuals expressed a long-term connection to place through time spent living in the area. Individuals spoke

about building homes in the early 60s and 70s, changing culture and trends, and their family history in the area.

Subtheme: Time in an Area

I came here in 92 and built this house and, just been here ever since. I work up on the slope in the winter. 3, not more than 4 months a year, usually and, that is it. I moved in 82. I lived in Dead Fish Lake for 8 years. I lived in Fairbanks for the first 2 years.

I was born in a Quonset hut in Palmer. And the life we lived there at that time was about the same as this is now. So, and everything was changing when I grew up, so my siblings all embraced the changes, and I didn't. I just moved over here to keep living the way we always had.

I've lived in Alaska 45 years coming right straight out of college... I've raised a family in the bush, living without electricity and hauling water and chipping ice and, and living in the interior in different places, four different places, so lake Minchumina is my last place that requires no roads off the road system pretty much.

[My wife] was a week old when she first came here.

Our parents built this one. They went about 15 to 20 miles away to get the logs, and they were up a creek, and they hauled them to the creek bank with a snow machine and built rafts out of them and then, when, after breakup they floated the rafts down the stream and pushed them all the way here with the boat, and that was when we had a big bay out here and you get a boat all the way here. So they finished this house in 1969, and then around late 70s our father added this green house on the front.

...and eventually we got a dog who had descended from a dog that Tom Flood, the beaver trapper out here, had given to Mary Shields in Fairbanks. So that was really neat to be able to trace the dogs back to the Floods, the original Minchumina trap line dogs. And almost all of our dogs out there now are descended from that dog that Tom Flood gave to Mary Shields. Yeah. And then they also go back to the Denali Park line and also Eagle. There is a lot of old time trap line type dogs still left in Eagle.

We first got dogs when we were in our midteens so that was mid-70s. So, long time, almost 40 years I guess, and our first dogs we just picked up around Fairbanks out of the free adds mostly and malamutes and Siberians...

But used to be a lot of people had dogs, dog teams. But we never did. Our son did. But we never did.

Several individuals mentioned the changes to Alaska that came in the 70s through the influx of people and the effects it had on a traditional Alaskan lifestyle.

About the time I got out of high school, was they discovered oil in Prudo Bay and then, then the whole pipeline thing and the great influx of people and, and all the craziness in the 70s with the pipeline construction and population explosion, so by being out here I avoided all that. Except for occasional trips to town, and you could see how bad it was, standing in line at a phone booth, bumper to bumper traffic in Fairbanks.

I just got tired of the hustle and bustle and built a house in Eagle River, and it just built so fast that it was not like it was when we first started. [We] just wanted to get out of there, so a guy at work, his wife's aunt and uncle had a place over across the lake by old Woman Kraken. So we ended up buying that and just for a kind of a weekend getaway and had an airplane back then. So we'd come out for the weekend. Usually just once or twice maybe in the summer until 75, then just decided to move out here. So we moved over there. I didn't have a job or anything. The only thing we, the only money we had were just what we got for selling the house, had payments, and, on that, so that is what, basically what we were living on.

One individual remembered living through the cultural phenomena of the 70s "back to the land" movement where living off the land was encouraged and revered. However, the movement had an impact on Lake Minchumina and its resources.

The other interesting thing in that the late, started about 1969 or so through the 70s, was you had this back to the land movement of young people all wanting to move out into the woods and close to the land....it was generally middle-class kids, or upper middle-class kids, that were, and they all wanted to try this and, and there was quite a few, we had some here, and scattered about, that tried living in the woods for, sometimes 8 or 10 years. And then as, the kind of novelty wore off for most of them, you'd be hard put to find any of them that stayed. But during that time frame then there was, there was more people out in the woods. More drain on the resources because everybody had dog teams and fishing and feed the dogs and stuff.

Had a movement, I do not know when it started, probably back in the late 60s, probably about the time we moved out here. We, before that even, people moved to the bush, read Mother Earth News. They were going to live off the land and home school their kids. Well they did that. You know and this, I think in the late

60s, 70s, and the 80s, and then in the 90s everybody started moving out. And they all left, and I do not know what caused that movement or why it hasn't happened again, but everybody just kind of moved out, and you do not have that now. In fact I heard the town schools are complaining because people from the bush are moving into town, and it is overcrowding the schools there so. I do not understand that, what that movement was that, and I never hear about Mother Earth anymore...

Main Theme: Family Connectedness

The importance of being together as a family unit was a common theme amongst Lake Minchumina participants. Participants mentioned the importance of passing down stewardship values and respect for the land. Additionally, the importance of being together as a couple was also mentioned.

Subtheme: Husband/Wife Bonds

...it is hard for us to be separate. We have had people come here and be with us for a few days and say, I do not see how you do it, we really, we have guys, this is what they were saying, we couldn't stand to be with our wives 24/7 like you guys are. And that is kind of hard to hear. They said you are constantly together. We are less comfortable when we are apart.

I do not do anything with anybody else, except [my husband].

When [my husband is] out trapping I do not have his messes to clean up. I piddle. I do not have any hobbies. I read. I read or I watch TV or I do something that I've been, that I've put off all summer that is in the winter. And basically our day is you know, it takes a lot of time when you get older to do whatever you do. You know you do not breeze right through it.... So he messes with wood in the summer and we do the garden. I do the yard. So what else do we do in the summer? Oh we go, we go on a lot of picnics. We love picnics.

Subtheme: Passing of Knowledge/Sharing Knowledge with Children

Passing knowledge down from parent to child was both a part of a family unit and expressed as an activity taken upon by the community. Individuals also expressed the culture of living off the land as being taught to them by their own parents.

But she grew up on a farm too, and when I was a kid, going to grandma's house, no running water, outhouse, coal stove for heat, coal potbelly stove, and so very similar.

But see I had a mom that did these kind of things. She was the first one to read Yule Gibbons. Where the wild asparagus lived, he was one of the first ones to write a book about eating the, eating off the land, eating. So she was always experimenting with us.

My mother enjoyed the outdoors. She took time. I see that rolly-polys and things outside and, you know, to do that with us, and I always thought, and yet she always made room, we had an extra plate always at the table if we wanted to drag home someone. She had a soft for the underdog or those who didn't have that.

And so she instilled in me this desire for knowing, she still, people, she's 90 years old and people still come to the house and ask her what's this. And she goes and keys it out. She was a botany, majored in botany. So she went to college too, which was quite rare. Graduated in 44. 1944. And then her mother went to teachers college and her father, grandfather, and her father went to college. So, education is important even if you are not going to college, you can just, wanting to know what's around you, I think is important.

Dad always had a garden. And I guess I didn't really have much to do with it, but I did some work, and I [had] been building the soil up is really what I [had] been doing. And getting the lake bottom stuff and algae from the shore. Putting it on the garden. Trying to replenish the soil without chemicals.

[My daughter] was 4 years old she used to go out with me. Be gone for 4 or 5 days. Sled, travel. And the kids learned how to cook. By the time they were 7 years old, they could do basic cooking, build a fire, you know, and cut wood with a bow saw. I believe that it was important that they learn how, if something happened to us, that they could still have a chance to survive. And the example I use, my dad had to leave home when he was 11 years old and he, him and his 13-year-old brother, lived in the mountains of Idaho and had to take care of 60 head of horses, you know. So I, and he was always said, there is no reason why a kid isn't 10, 11, 12 years old shouldn't be able to take care of themselves. And I mean, the basics, and that was always my goal, and it worked out, that they would be functional at that age.

The interesting thing she said she became aware of, it is like each generation thinks of something and builds on it, was that, she decided with her kids, that if she created a welcoming environment at home we would want to be there, and she could keep a better eye on us if we enjoyed home and wanted to be there.

Course I grew up with [this lifestyle], and there again it was all dogs and snowshoes, and what makes it the physical exertion that for me at that time was the connection with my father, just to be out there, to be doing this, and then course it still is to have done it with the kids and the family, to learn how to harvest them, how to read the tracks, and how to manage the trap line so you do not over trap things.

Subtheme: Spending Time Together as a Family

Being together as a family was important for the passing down of family values that included having a hard-work ethic and respect for others.

The time to, to be with your family, to do things, with them, to work together, and for them to see. Because now a lot of times families, and see, this is the advantage here, they saw us working. They did things with us when your parents go away to work somewhere else you do not necessarily see what, you do not understand, and a lot of times its the children too, they need to understand the parents is working hard, [and] they need rest [the kids] have to respect that and give them some space as well. You are cheating the child out of just always trying to make it too easy.

It is important to learn it. And it is also important for a child to realize that the things they do, the chores, are important to the family. What they do has value. Whether it is just bringing in the wood or whatever. By the time [my daughter] was 12, 13 years old she used to do a lot of the cooking.

Like the Bible says, you train up a child in the way he should go and then they decide, oh you train up a child, you do not just feed and water them and hope for the best you know. But we didn't, we did so many things together as a family you know, that they were, everybody was incorporated.

I just do not think parents realize how valuable it is to take the time to let them work with you, doing the dishes, bringing the wood in, ministering to others. They need to see those images implanted in their brain and feel like they're a part of and that these are valuable things. And when you just do it and you shove them off to the side or here you color, or do something, that is what they said. There are passive activities and interactive activities and seeing a movie or a video or cartoons is a passive thing.

Being together as family as a supportive unit was part of living a Lake Minchumina lifestyle of subsistence.

When I was a kid, we would drag home somebody to eat with us or to be there, and we felt safe and really comfortable at home. And, when our parents traveled, they rarely traveled without us. Kind of the same way even though my dad worked for the government, and we had a good job and a steady income and grandparents, I could see people around us that didn't have that. And the benefit, but, when they went on trips we felt valued because they never went without us. We all went together. We knew in our heart, I did, that we were the priority, that if something happened to one of us, there was no doubt growing up in my mind as a child that whatever my parents were doing at the time if they knew there was something, they would drop it immediately and come to our aid.

I am very comfortable being...by myself. But and I do spend quite a bit of time that way but it is, I would have [my wife] with me. We do a lot together. And I try to make it, you know, every, since I got married I try to make it so that we could as a family, go out in the winter time. It is like [when my son] was about 10 days old when he was on the trail, in the dog sled.

And back in our younger days we'd go up deep creek a lot and have picnic. Go all the way up Deep Creek, make a little fire, cook our food, and then come all the way... It was fun, it was fun.

I'd harvest the garden in the fall, and then we'd store it in the cabin over there and then get it hauled over here before it would freeze.

Subtheme: Historical Connections to Family-Heritage

Several individuals mentioned their connection to Lake Minchumina as being generational with parents or grandparents having settled in the area.

So those kind of pictures that you know, when you look back that, that kind of exemplify the feelings and what, what here means to us. Now for me, it is a connectedness with family. And now my children, or people, or even Dayna, can, you know, claims that now when people say oh but you are not permanent, well, they're part of fifth generation now here, and there isn't anyone else here that can say that.

[My sister] and I live here because our parents lived here, and we never liked it anyplace else. And [our neighbor is] here because she has always lived, most of her adult life, in the bush... [our other friend's] grandmother and her

husband...moved out here, you should ask them, but it was either the 40s or the 50s, and they ran the power plant for years and years. They were the ones who first started it. And when [our neighbor] was a kid, she would visit them most summers. And she always loved it here. And [her husband] hated Wasilla where he grew up, hated school, didn't like being around other people, and when he got out of high school he spent a year out here, he actually bought part of Slim Carlon's trapline that we later bought back from him. And trapped the first 15 or 20 miles out this way. And hung around out here quite a bit and finally married [our neighbor].

1950, was it 50? I know they were up in Alaska. They came here from Unalakleet. They were up on the coast, and when grandpa came here to work and, and they really liked the area and decided this is where they wanted to stay, so they were trying to think out how they could end up staying here and live their own more, you know, life connected with the, with the land and more on their own terms and starting homesteading, and they were the only ones that homesteaded here and, and then my folks ended up getting married here.

Main Theme: Freedom as a Value

Having the freedom to live a subsistence lifestyle was highly valued by participants in Lake Minchumina.

Subtheme: Free to Live Chosen Lifestyle

Sacrifices made to convenience and employment were considered minute compared to having the ability to be valued outside of mainstream culture, the pressure to succeed monetarily.

It is a choice thing. And we do not have to live this kind of a lifestyle. It is a choice. I think that makes a difference. Like we hear a lot of stuff about the poverty in the Lower 48 and stuff like that, and we probably do not live any different than they live, but the thing is if you are stuck in poverty and you do not see a way out of it, it makes a difference in how you feel. But if you are choosing to live in poverty, it is okay!

I think, I mean, [my partner] said, we're very lucky. We have such interesting people. Very knowledgeable, helpful, nice. And we do not have a lot of problems that, other villages or whatever can have. Yeah people do their own thing. And

everyone, I think that is the whole mode do not you think of with Alaskans is everyone is given a pretty wide berth. You wouldn't get away with this crap in [the] lower 48.

Several individuals expressed the positive feelings they experienced through living a lifestyle of self-reliance.

Free food, hello! And free medicine! You know, and, and different plants and everything, it is all about free. No, but it is really, it is, there is something about like, killing, raising, finding, your own food and medicine. It just is, there is something, urethral? How do you say that? No, what's that word I'm looking for? Good about it. Eh, what's the word I'm looking for?... Something satisfying there is something, it makes me feel good.

It does make you, doesn't it make you feel good that, you know, you fetched it yourself?

...for me, filling up a freezer is fulfilling and for somebody else it is not. And while a lot of the stuff we do is, is pretty easy to pick up superficially, it is kind of like riding a horse. It doesn't take long to learn how to ride one, but it takes a long time to learn how to ride one well.

You know where trapping is not my complete life, you know, I like to do it but I like to do other things too. And I have other things I have to do. But you know, I do it couple 3 days a week, and you know that is, that is good enough for me. I do not need to trap every day. Heck it gets kind of old after...and usually by the, I really enjoy it, at the beginning, and by the time it is over, end, end of February it is 4 months of trapping, and by the time it is over I'm ready to quit. I've had enough. But it is you know I do enjoy doing it.

It really does feel good when you got a moose hanging. But again, it is like free food right?

It makes you feel rich. Secure, yeah. And, and happy and kind of proud and independent even though you've got this whole pantry full of store bought food. ... and if you get a moose, it is like everything is fine now. We're all, we're all set. It is going to be a good winter. And then if you do not get a moose then you are feeling, it doesn't matter how many vegetables you have, you are feeling really sorry for yourself. It takes all the wind out of your sail. Then you'll think well you are not such a good person after all. It doesn't matter if you catch 20 moose in 21 years, that one year you do not get a moose, well you are worthless and you do not know how to hunt...

Subtheme: Free of State/Federal Laws

Having the ability to live in a community with few restrictions was also a valued aspect of living in Lake Minchumina.

I see this as being the most free place I've ever lived. Because, just for that reason there is, there is really no regulation or anything. We're unincorporated into, there is no, I mean, there is officially there is bylaws to this plat, this plat, but nobody enforces them, so.

I have the sides, and the stuff I have to make signs, and I was so kicking myself in the ass because here the firefighters and want to know the trails or whatever and, so we need to make road signs, but we cannot decide on a good name. You know? Because you can name it whatever the hell you want.

[My husband is] right, the freedom, we are willing to make the sacrifices for the freedom of still being in charge, in control to what we can expect of our own life. That to us is worth a lot.

Subtheme: Free to Live Chosen Lifestyle

Societal acceptance was strong within Lake Minchumina. Participants expressed their ability to be themselves without cultural expectations being placed upon them by others in the community.

You know, that is what's nice about here. That is another thing, remember that I'll make stuff or do stuff and, no one chides me it is like oh you are a jerk or an asshole or that is stupid. Go ahead try it, do it, go for it, you know, see if it works. It might work for ya, you know, who knows. I would've totally chided and made fun of in Michigan.

...you have to be careful. You do not just project your own agenda onto people, you do not give them the freedom to be who they are.

It is like if there oh we do not encourage people to, to think outside the box you know, and, just a human, a human nature then. We have a more eclectic mix of people here.

But anyway, different, there is a mix of people, but it is more like you do your own thing and that is fine.

But we have both lived in the city and stuff at different times, and I mean you can do it, but, is that what you would choose to do? Given a choice, is that what you'd choose? No, not for me.

It just had a lot of freedom to it, and it had something that we could, you know, we both enjoyed the outdoors a lot and just I guess, doing things on our terms and [my husband] was always very good at working with his hands and in a lot of different capacities and, and so I felt certainly comfortable and safe there, and he'd already had started working on this cabin, and my children are fortunate in that they had grandparents here.

One participant noted that living in Lake Minchumina was a choice that individuals were free to make.

And [our neighbors] and us... people came from all different, because as [my husband] says, we're not here because we have to be because we do not know where else to go, but most of the people here choose to be here...

I think everybody, we're lucky that, everybody lives in Lake Minchumina with a possible exception of [our one neighbor], I am not sure, lives here because they want to. And I think it is a problem in some of the Native villages that some people do not actually want to live there, and they do because they do not have any other options. And I think everybody here is here because they want to...

But as a kid, this is what the cool part is, he's not telling you the rest of the story, the movie Jeremiah Johnson was an inspiration when he was a kid, and he wanted to live out and be like a mountain man in the wilderness, and he built his own log cabin on his parent's farm Iowa. And, yeah, it is really cool. And then no one thought he would do [it], and he did it.

Not being dependent on general society as a whole was a strong value within the community of Lake Minchumina.

We'd heard that they would had to fly rescue missions to most places for fuel oil, for things, because they had run out, and they become dependent, and most of them had woodstoves had been taken out of their places. They relied more on their electricity, in acquiring funds in a lot of ways they would gotten, when you are in a rural setting when you get away from the land, you then put yourself at risk, but the worst thing is not just that you put yourself at risk, you've placed yourself in the hands of someone else. You are no longer able to be in charge of your own household or your life, someone else is in charge, and I do not know if they really realize.

No, and then it was interesting because there was a newspaper reported and we actually ended up on the front page of the newspaper. He came and talked to [my

husband] and I because it was coming from that way and we were the first ones on this end ... and it was interesting because he came, and he interviewed us, and he said "what are you going to do if it burns down? " ..., it was, weird because you got the feeling that he was expecting you to look at what other resources or fall apart, or we're going to have to have some help or something. [My husband] just said "we just start over, we just start over again," and I think he was somewhat taken aback or baffled by that because now with all the FEMA and this and the loans and stuff, but none of that stuff is free. People do not realize, and my grandmother had it in there. You cannot give to one without taking from someone else. And that is something people do not recognize. It comes from somewhere.

But how you are raised and that sense of independence that you have, you have to have and that wanting to, but then you have to accept responsibility for yourself as well.

Having the freedom to dictate one's own schedule was valued among participants.

I like it when I do many different things in a day. Garden, I build something, I go boating, or cut wood, just mix it up and do a lot of different things. Clean house, wash windows, build another house, fix the roof, go swimming, go hunting, do as many things, do as many different things and as many things as I can in a day. I feel good. Cook a good meal. Cook enough food so you do not have to cook for a couple days.

Yeah and that is like, you are never bored you always have something to do or that, but at the same time if you decide that day, you know what, were just tired, were just kind of' been overstimulated, we just need a day to ourselves, we can take a day to ourselves.

It provides for a space if you want to have that in your life. And I think that is what we value and we see. And I think [my son and daughter] they miss it. And I think [my daughter-in-law] recognizes that too, and they're both hard workers and going to do that, but then it's nice when you can take a day and go out in the boat and just enjoy being on the beach, with the kids, walk along the beach look for those rocks like our neighbors have and that kind of thing.

Another participant mentioned how freedom was exemplified in belongingness with the natural environment that one was knowledgeable of.

There is a picture of [our son] when he was still with us, those last couple years, and we were in Hidden Lake, and he was standing beside the cabin looking out over the lakes, and I thought this exemplifies freedom. You know, he's there are the cabin, he looks comfortable with what he's doing, and he looks like he fits in with the picture. It is not like you are taking a tourist and stuck him there and they

do not belong, but he's looking out over you know, what's there you just, you have this expanse of country, but yet a place that you are safe, and you are comfortable in...

Main Theme: Survival/Resource Dependence

Individuals expressed a high degree of reliance on the local resources. While much of their food was purchased from stores in larger cities such as Fairbanks or Anchorage, moose meat, white fish, wood, water, vegetables from summer gardens and other local resources were a large part of the participants' dependence. In a community where oil was expensive to have flown in, much of the community was reliant upon firewood for their everyday heating purposes.

I think though probably the biggest thing though we subsist on is our heat. It is the firewood.

But you can see, yeah, we do eat a lot of store bought food. We maybe get a third of our food off the land either wild or the berries and the meat and the fish, or domesticated garden and stuff.

Usually the barn gets a bunch of snow on it, and then it all sluffs in the spring and usually load up a couple barrels to melt in the, in the yard, just for garden water or whatever. Because there is a certain period during freeze-up and breakup that you, that it is hard to get water.

Usually out more than mostly anyone. And [our neighbor] is out a lot, I mean outside, but she's busy doing [things]....I keep telling [her], you have to really slow down a little bit, you know! Like, but she's really, she hasn't amped in, she's like really survival mode, you know, cutting her wood...

I think we have what we live off of, and biggest thing probably like you said is our wood. Second would be moose.

Subtheme: Conserving/Respecting Resources

Several participants mentioned value placed on having both the wisdom and skills needed to live in a rural as well as a city environment. Lake Minchumina was also seen as a place of refuge and safety that one could depend on as a place of safety and retreat if a future emergency situation were to occur.

... even though [our daughter] went away and values certain things in that, she wants a cabin here too that mental ability to have a place and know that, even [our son] said, you know, if there is something happened, or some catastrophe, upheaval, he felt that coming here was the thing to do. And so they view it and even if they're not here, in their subconscious as a place of safety and refuge and rest to where, where they could survive and to have a place, and people when I walk around in towns or cities and I think, do they, do they know how vulnerable they are? Or how close, how little it takes to just change and the whole and, and their whole infrastructure is, is gone, and then basic things, like water and heat, or cool and stuff that they need to survive are, they do not know how to get, or it is been taken away from them, you know...

Yeah, so, were going to have to think about other things, there is going to have to be possibility of more fish farming and stuff because there isn't going to be enough resources for everybody. Clean water. So anyway, the problem, that is the real question as me at 67, is there going to be, for the next, for my grandchild, children, I have a 10-year-old and 1-year-old. What kind of world are they going to live in when they're 67?

I think most people just are caught up in life so much they do not, and I, maybe I somewhat have a little sense of that all the time growing up or, or that I touched bases because my father was outdoor and hunting oriented and I went with him. I didn't have any brothers and was older, but that is something and knowing your resources, even when I go into a city or I go visit, I like to hike around what businesses what resources, what's around us to know the area I guess it is. It is just a sense of wanting to know what's around you, what area you are in, what have you got to work with. And I, I think few people really think that way or that when you are traveling because my mom says people make fun of her in her car, she carries survival gear. But it is just, you do not have to be but a couple miles out of town and you are in a survival situation...

They had to haul in water for washing their hands because I didn't have my indoor plumbing set up so they had to dip from a bucket for their hands so they had to haul water and they had to use the outhouse and so, still even living here, more like a cabin life, they still had to adjust. But now they can do it. Now, hopefully if they, because I talked to them about the future, there might be no

electricity in the future.

I think they should know both how to live and both in the, you know the bare bone minimum as well as well I can live in the city. I just came back from Europe and I navigated in a foreign country on all these busses and airplanes and walked down city streets with maps and came right to the door of the people that I knew, and I think that is just as important to be able to do that too. Without a GPS by the way. Yeah, so I think you have to live in both worlds.

Subtheme: Sharing Knowledge

The value of self-reliance was important in passing on to the younger generations.

That is the other thing, do not make it too easy for your children. It doesn't, it is like a plant. You take a plant you are trying to raise plants with a garden. If they have got too much heat and too much moisture, and you are doing it all and they're really spindly and thin. And then when something harsh comes along, they keel right over. They have no strength of their own to stand. And, but if they have been buffeted by wind a little bit, occasionally they have had a drought, um, they're a lot stronger, and they know they can stand through something if they have experienced some hardships or they have experienced going through their family, they know they can make it.

We always had small cabins and people worry about space for kids, but the kids, you didn't stay in the house all day. You did what you needed to, and it was kind of a place of meals and of sleeping and that, but you went outdoors, the majority of the day. You were either doing chores, getting wood stocked or water, hauling that, making sure each day that you'd got that stuff in place before nightfall and then doing dog beds or doing the traplines or, playing, you know.

Subtheme: Conserving/Respecting Resources

The long hours of work that goes into living a subsistence lifestyle was detailed by several participants. These activities included harvesting fish, moose, and the preparation of the harvested foods for storage.

We have a limited amount of power here because we usually run off 12-volt batteries. And then we have a little generator we can charge them with when we

need to most of the time they're charged off of solar power. But a big chest freezer takes just more power than we can deal with. So our big chest freezer is plugged into the community power plant on the other side of the lake. So anytime we have a whole bunch of vegetables to freeze we have to make an hour and a half long trip across the lake to put them in there. We can handle small amounts, like up to about 5 pounds in the freezers we have here. And we have one 12-volt freezer that runs all the time, but its not cold enough to freeze outside and then a propane freezer that just runs when we're freezing a lot of stuff.

We use a gill net and check it every other day and those fish are fed for the dogs and use a net as oppose to a hook, a rod, because the net we go and run it, it takes about 15 minutes to pick the fish out of a net, and it would take an hour or sometimes several days to catch that many fish if you were using a hook and a rod. So it is just time. And a lot of subsistence is opportunistic, so if there is a lot of fish we'll catch a lot and dry them or freeze them, and if there is very few fish we might even pull the nets and feed dog food because it is just not worth the effort.

So we try to stay 2 years ahead, and it seems like a lot of people around here, they either keep up with their firewood or they keep up with their capital projects and then green, burn green wood. Which, when you burn green wood you have to cut a whole lot more of it. So [my sister] and I have always made a big deal about getting our firewood in as soon as we can and getting it good and dry before we burn it, but because of that we've got these cabins that need tearing down and other cabins that need replacing and this and that, and we do not get our capital projects done. We always have a good wood supply.

And then the chickens I do not consider them to be subsistence. And then there is the whole "living off the land" thing I do not consider myself a live off the land, I depend very heavily on it for a lot of resources, but, good heavens we cannot do without our chocolate chips! Evaporated milk and pilot bread and oatmeal and flour and sugar and...

Main Theme: No Waste Lifestyle

Not wasting resources through simple actions taking place on a daily basis was a strong element among participants. Frugality was also mentioned as a value that the participants had been taught to them by their parents. Both tangible elements, such as harvest of game, as well as metaphysical perceptions of time were both valued and seen as a resource not to be wasted.

Subtheme: Simple Lifestyle Is Positive

The lifestyle of no waste and living within one's means was highly valued in Lake Minchumina.

I would raise a goat and butcher it at the end of the year and eat them, but God's, we are sufficient, God does provide, if you take care of what you have, I, and you are not going to, overdo it, you will have food, but then you can run out, because that is why the Natives were nomadic, see by being in the same place like we are we can overdo it. So that is why you need a garden to supplement the natural things. But I could very easily have put up lambs quarters if I had come 3 weeks earlier I could have, before they went to seed, I could have put up enough lambs quarters to eat all winter long.

I think a lot of people out here, whether they have money or not, they do not need the big boat.

I haven't bought any clothing. You can make your own clothing out of the tan moose hide, you'll get to see that at Miki and Julie's. Making more of your clothing, and I did do that more when I was raising a family. Now I just, repair and make what I have last. And, so, yes its God-sufficient and its living a life where you just realize that you are just part of it, animals and plants....

...Because when I'm eating by myself, I just like stand up at the sink and let the crumbs going down the sink so it is less cleaning up. And I eat out of the same plate. I lick it clean or rinse it off and pour the water out and keep using the same plate over and over again.

If I can burn something I'll put it in my stove here. I do not let it add up. I do not let it build up where you have to, you know, if I'm living right I do not create a whole lot of garbage from town. Plastic wrappers and stuff. I do not buy potato chips and all that garbage food that has the packaging. I try not to, I mean, I do not even like potato chips that much to justify buying them and shipping them out. I try to be low impact.

I just do not like waste. I do not like to see things wasted or used for what they shouldn't be used for.

One of the pictures I chose was a clock with an X through it and 18 hours on it because I wanted people to realize that this kind of lifestyle...is not where you can kick back and read a book every day. It is 18 hours of doing things that I really enjoy doing, and probably most of my life I've gotten an average of 6 hours of sleep, or even less, and when you have a project sometimes your, you stay up all night like when you are skinning out a moose and have to take care of the meat because the meat is spoiling because the weather is too hot. You do not want to

waste anything.

Because in an environment like this you build upon each year, builds upon something more and so if you see someone struggling 1 year time, well, maybe all they got built was their cabin or a storage shed or their woodshed, but the next year they're not going to have to do that same thing. Then they can do something different and, and it takes time to build those things, and so if a person is willing to, a lot of times it can be a fairly small amount of resources. In fact you do better if you have less. You do not look to them as the answer for everything.

Two individuals mentioned the influential nature of their parent's resource conservation brought on by the historical situations of the Great Depression.

I didn't get to travel much when I was a kid. My dad didn't want me to use any gasoline, so I didn't. I had to walk. When I was young, dad would get me out here, but I had to either paddle or walk. We had, we had some small, small outboards and three-wheelers, but he wouldn't let me use the gas. We had the gas, but he wouldn't let me use it. We had to ship more out.

I got to go hunting when dad was not here. We went bird hunting and stuff. He was just trying to be miserly I think, economically. He was that way. Depression born in the depression.

And our father taught us a lot of, basically everything we know about electricity and wiring and welding, and our mother taught us fur sowing and making jam, everything like that, yeah. So, they didn't say things like, "do not waste that," they would say "well, do not throw that out, I'm going to use it someday" or "Let's use that for this" or "Do not get your moose meat dirty because you do not want to have to cut that off, keep your moose meat clean and take care of it because we do not want it spoil." We're going to hang it, but then we're going to get it in the freezer if it's staying too warm to keep.

Our mother growing up in the depression never wasted anything. And she always wanted to save stuff because you never know, and that is called bush mentality, you do not throw stuff out if you might ever want it. So, a lot of places look like trash heaps but they are not really trash you know that is a drum that sooner or later is going to turn into a dog pot or, whatever, and old piles of wire, we're going to need that someday. We do not throw it out.

One individual expressed her respect for the environment as a no-waste philosophy as being similar to Native traditions.

A lot of it seems to reflect Native values without actually coming from Natives and, and the respect for the land, and you do not kill something unless you have a

use for it. And if you do have a use for it it is fine to kill it, but if you do not have a use for it then do not kill it, leave it alone. Do not go and scare it away. Its doing fine there; you are not going to help it by going and poking it. Find a big caterpillar in the road, put it in a bush! You do not step on it just because it is a caterpillar!

Like when I was talking about Native traditions, you know I am not Native and I haven't even really been exposed to a lot of Native traditions, when I hear about, when I hear about people trying to express their connection to the land I'm kind of saying, yeah, that is right, just like us. Or you do not kill something if you are not, do not have a use for it, yeah, that is us.

I used to say that I lived a self-sufficient lifestyle. And now that I have, you know been reading the Bible, and I've read some things about the Native, the Natives and their being a part of the circle of life. You know that is really a great concept if you truly want to be an environmentalist.

Having a general respect for game harvest was a strong element in regards to not wasting or harvesting more than needed.

He got me a new .22 last year. I like to kill things and I know that is bad, but I mean, I like to eat them, I mean I do not kill them for the hell of killing, I mean I like to eat them. I like to go and fetch some food. I mean it is like, and I do not, it is not like I have a freezer full, it is only, a couple of grouse, but I really love rabbit.

I wouldn't want to trap and then just waste it. I do not have a use for that, you know, that many furs. But, but I do enjoy [hunting]. I do not really enjoy killing the animals, but I enjoy the trapping. I think it is a little bit like fishing. And you throw your line out; you are not sure what you are going to catch.

When we shoot a moose, we'll haul home the meat, but then we'll go back and we'll haul home buckets full of blood. We'll haul home any of the bones, for the dogs, cook those up for the dogs, we'll haul home the hide and we'll dry and then either give it to the dogs as a treat or use it as bait on the trapline. And we'll haul home, put the guts in buckets and haul that home and let it rot and use it for bait, and by the time we're done, as long as the moose is fairly easy to get at, there won't be anything left. There will be a packed area with a little bit of blood that you couldn't scrape up, and that is all. And I do not expect other people to do that. I do not look down my nose at people who leave gut piles out I, it is more like I really appreciate having a use for it and being able to just take it all home.

Subtheme: Conserving Resources

Several individuals discussed how they defined subsistence and the mentality of living the lifestyle and the issue they had with general societal definitions of the term.

I kind of look at it like if you'd pick berries then that is subsistence. I mean whether you live in town or whether you do not. You know wherever you live, if your, unless you raise them. Well I guess even if you raised them that would be subsistence. And wood, the same. I guess even garden would be. Living off the land is kind of the way I look at it.

To us [subsistence] means you take whatever you are given and you do not pass up whatever it is whether it is big or small or whatever size that really is not the issue and you are not even concerned about that. It is meat to feed your family.

Well the connotation would be that you are living subpar. It is like collecting off the land. I think it is if you use either your entire or part of your, your living comes from the land, or, right?

To one degree or another everybody subsists a little bit. It is just utilizing the resources around you. And also being good stewards of what you use too.

You are not earning income all that time. And so if you require a higher level income or a constant level, then that is not the life, you know, the kind of thing that you are going to be happy with. ... But you are just utilizing whatever you can get your hands on. You are not giving any thought to whether it is big, small or in between. But I think there probably is a portion of people who think that, well if you are going to do subsistence then you should you know, you should have no, nothing else, you know, and a resource should be on the low end of everything.

But, another way to say adaptation is innovation. Because that is, that is important here is to be able to innovate what you need from what you have.

Yeah, subpar, below normal. No look what I'm saying is, would that include dump diving? Why not? It is like using your resources, repurposing...

Because everyone subsists on some level just, like [our neighbor] says basically as utilizing the resources they have around them whether they are in town and they go to the dumpster and find furniture or building materials or they go. I mean there [are] resources of advantages wherever you live. And on a basic level that is all that is.

The importance of utilizing all the resources around you was an important theme among

several participants. Common activities for utilizing wood or natural elements as a frugal activity was mentioned.

I wander the woods and the beaches aimlessly. A finder. I find it and it is like I'm either going to eat it or makes some art work out of it.

We do not cut the good trees, but there is a lot of them that are topped off or tipped over in the wind, and that is the ones that we use for our wood.

We built it as a beaver cradle and that a beaver weighs maybe 30 or 40 pounds for a good sized one, even bigger than that, you are skinning them they are really rolly-polly, and if you put them in this cradle, you put them in length wise and it holds them still and you can roll them, and they are not going to try to roll back. So it kind of holds them in position. But then, it turns out it is also very handy for sawing up frozen moose meat or frozen salmon. It just holds them like a nice saw horse. Julie built that. That the logs, boards, are actually milled from spruce logs.

Main Theme: Solitude

Solitude was valued as being absent from the noise of larger urban environments with traffic and living in close proximity to larger amounts of people. Quietness was valued as part of the lifestyle of living in Lake Minchumina, as an escape and as having healing elements to the psychology of the individual. As a lifestyle, individuals saw solitude and quietness as a way to connect with nature and relax in an environment devoid of overstimulates. Having time alone, to be with oneself, was mentioned by participants.

Subtheme: Part of Living a Simple Lifestyle

But if you want to help to see the mountain, you want to unwind, you want to just enjoy being near the water you know, hiking, doing any, and you want privacy and space because see I like that when I go instead of being, so I like to just, you know, be left alone and get to do my own thing.

So usually it is just keeping up with the martin and lynx and mink once in a while.

Yeah, the smaller animal, yeah, they're a lot, lot faster to do and a lot easier but, but I like to tie them by myself. I enjoy that. I mean I do not have anything against people, but I do like time by myself.

I lived in Salcha even and I still thought I was too close to the neighbors, so. I do not like seeing anybody's backyard...It just reminds me of how close I am to people. I can get along, I can be friendly, I stay on my side of the line, but I, look, look what I can see here, I do not have to see anybody's backyard. I could clear these trees out and then people could see me more. I do not want it. That is the only reason I do not brush it out and cut them all down.

I guess with people you could always talk you know, but by yourself you could just listen.

Subtheme: Connecting with Nature

Quietness was valued as a way in which to enjoy the natural elements. The nuances of local wildlife was more noticeable due to the silence.

I do not know. You really appreciate like I said the sky, lack of noise.

One of the things my mother mentioned when she came out for the first time, probably over at the other lake, but that she could hear, like the ravens flying and stuff. You could hear their feathers or whatever, and she had never really noticed that before. It was so quiet there.

I really value, the quietness here. I can hear everything. I could sit and listen, I love to listen. You know, I have ADD, but it is like I can hyper focus, and it is like and just listen to everything, or wait to hear something. That is even exciting. I know I'm going to hear something really soon!

Subtheme: Get Away from People/Noise/City

Having alone time away from large urban areas was valued. A lack of vehicle noise and traffic as well as the general noise of living near large communities of people was also seen as a positive element to Lake Minchumina.

Quiet is pretty nice. There in town it is, every place you go is hustle bustle. You get out on the highway it is bumper to bumper traffic. You go in the grocery store

there is a big line of people, and, up to cash register big line of people. You go out in the parking lot; you cannot hardly get out and you get out on the street, it is busy, and then you just...I have nothing against people. I like people, but I do not want a 100,000 of them.

I do not know just to get out, away from the hustle and bustle and all the traffic and the noise.

I think going, driving into the city in rush hour is a lot of work. Dealing with all those people and stores, that is a lot of work. It is exhausting. No I do not find this a lot of work.

I think I just like the peace out there you know, and you did what you had to do, and it is just peaceful. Over here you always have to work on this or that, get something done, or somebody else wants your time. They think we do not do anything, but there is always something to be done, you know, and especially when you are alone.

Subtheme: Brought About Psychological and Physiological Healing

Quietness as a healing element was mentioned several times during one particular interview with a participant. This long-term resident of Lake Minchumina valued the quiet aspect of the Lake area as restorative and useful as a tool to rejuvenate visiting individuals as well as local residents.

I think it is a unique place. I think even in the state of Alaska there [are] not many places like Minchumina, no. That is like that and where we have this kind of a, you know, the body of water the, the view that we have. The mountain. We have a lot of natural things that, that just, help to kind of bring peace.

But see those are the kind of stressers like that, rush hour traffic and people do not even realize, fighting the lines in the stores, grocery stores, whatever, and they wonder why there is all these cancers and stuff and illnesses, and it is stressers that are triggering different genes and to turn on and people have no clue, you know, the stress they endure... and they cannot even think of living some other way and, and like you said, you know, do people, would people find this hard, how could this be hard? You know? So we both said living in the city, that is hard. I mean I like to go and visit and stuff. That is fine.

Or when you have a foundation to where you were created and how you were created, and it just makes sense. And so being stewards of the land and recognizing that we have a need for that and though yes, cities are valuable and

important, and they have their work areas that need to be, you need places for people to be able to get out of that environment. It is not healthy. It creates a constant adrenaline stress environment. To connect with the land and just have time and space to ponder a leaf and what it looks like and how the colors change or some need that more than others.

I look at it more as an opportunity to serve. I want these people. I know they come from town, it's hectic there, it's stressful, it's overstimulated, I want them to just relax. I want them to be able to breath, to enjoy, to just have some down time because I think people need that. So I, that is why I think of it as, it is a getaway, a retreat. It is a time of healing and nurturing...

...and that is what I really enjoy, sharing, and like you said, seeing people relax. Like this gentleman, they're very different when they first come in. They're tense, they're just tight they're wound up, and to see people unfold and to relax and to kind of start to see things around them that they didn't see at all when they first came what not to be afraid of, just silence, for instance.

A calm, a retreat, like you said, the things that kind of symbolize home, a refuge. Because you know I know most of the people here. I enjoy most of the people that are here, you know. And, and it, but I live in a way and a location that I can interact or not or choose how often I do or connect with anyone. It is quiet here. When I'm in town though I consider myself to be, you know, I've gone to college I've gone places, I'm adaptable and, and can deal with those kinds of things, but especially the noise, the intensity, the speed at which things, and the distractibility... those things all sort of wear on you and take a toll.

Main Theme: Technology

Technology, such as computers, GPS, and snow machines were discussed as having negative effects on an individual's ability to connect with nature and live a fulfilling subsistence lifestyle. Older participants lamented the dependence of younger generations on technology and the need for knowing how to live apart from technology.

Subtheme: Negative for Community/Youth

And I think it is important to have hands on actual, doing it rather than just a computer program. And I got him to leave his home and his computer, and I had I had his full attention. Because when I visit him at his house, I do not have his full

attention...I am second to the computer. I've told him that. I said, I'm jealous of that computer. So, when I asked him, please, I really want you to come out to Lake Minchumina, what would you like to do? And he said, he came up with the idea. So I was glad, I hope they want to continue, and they want, I invited them to come back in the winter and do some winter survival.

And I think computers stifle you, stifle kids from learning their environment. It scares me. But maybe they do, through girl scouts and boy scouts a little bit. But I do not think that the majority of the real young ones that are like in elementary school, how much outside do they do?

Well, in honor for the next generations after this to understand about subsistence or living off the land, or, you know just being away from the city and away from computers, and know that there is another life besides computers, which I seem to think dominates the younger generations. ...So I have accumulated a lot of skulls and furs and things from all the animals, from trapping, and I made them into a museum. And hopefully [my friend] and I will get a grant. There is you had part of a grant that had to do with subsistence and Amy said that we could apply for one next year for a camp. Where we're going to have the kids come and live off the land.

Well I think it is important for kids to get out you know and look where they live you know. If they're going to live here they should learn the ways of life. It is and it shouldn't be forced if they want to play video games let them play video games.

Subtheme: Reduces Connectedness to Nature/Family/Friends

Snow machines and GPS, while more efficient than traditional technologies of orienteering and dog sled travel, were viewed as unreliable and as a hindrance to individual's ability to connect with the land.

But mostly we've created things with more speed to just go and quickly move across the land. It is like trapping used to take more connection with the land and going. Now you can travel quite a distance. Go check it, zip back, and not even spend any time out there.

But snowmachines came along and they, you know, they worked pretty good. But now snow machines have gotten away from small, practical things. They're all into big fast, high marking kind of a thing. It is really hard to find a machine that is suitable for this kind of a lifestyle.

I do not do GPS, though I have been in cars with GPSs. I can see that they can

come in handy. But I had to rescue guys that thought they could come out from Nenana to Lake Minchumina with GPS, but they didn't have them as accurate as they thought and we had to come with the dogs from the other direction and open up the trails so they could find it. They were 12 miles from here and ran out of gas, and we had to bring gas with the dogs.

Technology was viewed as a distraction to living a simple lifestyle, a way of life more accustomed to by the culture of Lake Minchumina.

They're a lot of work, and it is pretty stupid to have a dog team if you do not love dogs, but we really like dog sledding. We're not that big on snow machining. We do have a snowmachine. We are using it seems like more and more, but the dogs are fun. And I probably wouldn't run a long trap line if I had to take a snowmachine. But the dogs can also go places a snowmachine cannot.

I do not care for riding on a snowmachine just to go riding up and down the lake. Or boat either, or four-wheeler either, you know. I do not care for that. I like to be going somewhere. I go...for the scenery and, I enjoy that. That was the reason I went up the creek yesterday just, get out and see some, not different country, but county I had not seen in a few weeks.

And each of the technology things bring a plus, but they also bring a minus because they fragment your time and they start to divide and start to take another little slice. You know, the phone takes a slice, that was not when you just had CB, the internet you know takes, if you start to contact people they want you to respond to them on there if you take the time and you, and decide whether you want to have that. Now the twins have decided they do not have the time for that. And they, they do not want to do an email because if it became known or they had one that people would send it to them, they would have to respond in some way...

For ourselves, it is like we're stuck in the 1970s. So we depend a lot on freezers and outboard boats, generators, but to me a GPS is still a toy. And a computer we're up to writing stories on a computer, but I'm lost when I get online. And the, I do not even know how to send an email. I've never sent an email in my life except once we had to make comments when they were going to close our post office, and I was able to. Somebody else found the site for me, and I was able to write in my comment and push send, and that was all there was to it...

Connections to Nature and Place

Connections to nature and place were mentioned by all participants during the interviews. Subthemes included resource dependence on the local harvest, local

ecological knowledge, personal enjoyment, and connection to place.

Subtheme: Resource Dependence

Individuals saw themselves as living in tandem with the land and as having a responsibility as stewards to respect the land.

It is God-sufficient because it came from. It was here. I'm just, taking from the land the things that are already here. I'm not, I do not have a fish farm. I'm not farming the moose...

Subsistence to me is more that connection with the land. It is a feel you develop more, a oneness with those ebb and flows of the elements that provide abundance...at times, at other times scarcity, and you have to be willing to partake of those times and try to do your best to prepare yourself to go through them.

When you have the, when the season for certain foods are, it is a short season, and we have 24 hours of daylight, so in the summer you are up lots. And doing what you can to get ready for winter, and then when winter comes you can maybe relax a little bit more and do some of the indoor projects.

We moved out of here 2 years before he went to town. And, so, well, we're thinking about all the things we're going to eat when get to Fairbanks, you know. Not going to be fish, not going to be coleslaw. We lived on that. Or french fries. Because we lived on potatoes. So we go to town, and we go to this restaurant. Every one of us ordered the fish and the coleslaw and french fries, and we didn't even realize it until we started eating, and we go, what are we doing?

Subtheme: Knowledge of Wildlife/Seasons

Living in Lake Minchumina and partaking in subsistence activities was a method for individuals to connect with the land, to grow and learn about themselves and nature in the process. Connecting to nature was a valued characteristic of living in Lake Minchumina.

So it is all the resources we get, not just meat and fish, and it is all the knowledge that goes along with it.

If you do not know about the animals and the plants around, you are not aware of your whole being, I mean and our, I cannot fathom someone going through life without knowing a little bit more about the outdoors. But I think people are not being aware of their environment. So if you want people to recycle or be aware of... what's happening with climate change... and what's happening with the plants and animals around you even if you live in the city, then you are not going to be conscious about how you fit into the, of the whole circle of life, and you are not really caring about what your footprint is like.

A sense of knowledge of the land and knowing when there are changes in the land, you notice things like that. They are meaningful to you. Like when the river changes, that means something to us. And it might mean it is harder to get to the house or might mean there is not as many sandbars, so we cannot walk up the bank as well or we, it is like a lot of the rivers have become deeply inside. They are running down a narrow channel and that makes it more dangerous to try to cross because they are going to be over your head instead of waist deep. We've seen a lot of changes like that, and they're all very meaningful to us.

Oh and how is that with subsistence? Because you have to be flexible when the food is so plentiful. Well you have to be ready, ready to do what needs to be done. And drop another project. Like you might be working on something and all of a sudden someone says I just shot a bear that was into the garbage, we got to take care of it. And sure enough, you do, there is no worry about what's priority.

Every day I'd go get my buckets and I'd just walk out to the yard and bring them in, and I had all different buckets going and then, wash water I could heat somewhat on the stove, and then [my partner] also taught me to if you put a little bit of warm water down the middle of your bucket or what and then it all melts faster, and so it is fun...

Like the wood cook stove, there are things that I was not born with. I was not raised with them. But you develop that higher sense of intuitiveness and feel for the heat, what it is going on, for your scraping the hides, the thickness and feel, and I think the Native Americans had a really highly defined sense of that that I'm afraid that is to me one of the biggest tragedies of the loss of that...

So this recycling without a full dedication to the whole environment and knowing your spot in the environment, I do not think it is going to work and if you do not believe in it, and you just say, oh I recycle and think that that is all you need to do to make this planet better, you do not really have the full picture and I do not think that the schools are doing such a great job in that line. I think that is why I was into outdoor education...

Figured it was a wolf that had chewed up our motor. We didn't really want to shoot him because the pelts not really worth much, but it gets pretty annoying when they're coming around. And we've had them attack dogs and other people

have had them actually come into dog yards and kill dogs, so we figured it was time to go.

Participants mentioned in detail their knowledge of local plant, bird, and land mammal activity. Many years spent living in an area allowed for a deep connection to the local wildlife cycles. Additionally, changes to the water level of the lake and tributaries due to erosion or beaver activity was well remembered.

We used to count on catching at least a 100 martin a year, but for the past 12 years the martin population has been really depressed, and we haven't really figured out why, and we'll let part of our line go on trap for a couple of years, and that doesn't seem to make any difference at all, and it seems to be food related because the vole population has been pretty low, and we're always participating in studies, and one of the recent ones we did was sending in little samples of each martin, and they were analyzing that and realized that our martin were actually eating a lot of squirrels. And then kind of the historical thinking was that martin do eat squirrels, but then when they were studied it was found that, no voles, if you do not have lots of voles, they're not going to reproduce. But because our martin are eating squirrels that suggests that there really are not many voles out...

Twenty years ago, well, 25 years ago maybe now, the lake was huge. You know there was no spit. When we first came here there was no spit, and you could use a lake boat. But it is really changed. But this old timer told us that every 20 years, changes? So we've been on a low. We had more water this year than we've had probably in the last 5 or 10 years.

After a burn it is pretty nice for morals. That is, that is by far the best mushroom there is I think. And the only time you get them is after a burn.

And pretty soon, it'll be awhile yet, since September we'll have 200, 300 swans out here. And they're noisy. They are noisy. And then one morning you wake up, it is just quiet. They're all gone. I always wanted to see them leave, but I never have.

Lot of [the] birds get started early. Like those ravens. Just barely the crack of dawn I mean you, faintly see it starting to get daylight, and there is ravens flying. They do not wait until it gets good and daylight.

Comes to 3 years ago when the lynx were, had a lot of them, rabbits were high, and couple times we seen a lynx down here go down the front yard in the summer, and one of them come down the hill, like he was going to come right here, and then he turned around and went back up. But I imagine we won't be seeing any now because they're in a low cycle.

I usually look for wildlife. See if anything is moving...I saw a wolf here last year, saw a black bear two or three times, and it was just in the backyard here by the garden, so that is basically what I'm thinking is just birds or the eagles or anything interesting like swans or geese or, I do not really hunt ducks, so I do not pay attention to, I do not like eating ducks so. There are some grouse sitting around too. You can listen for grouse. Listen to the birds. I remember what my mom was thinking when she was out here watching. It was a little more activity then with the lake different. This marsh kind of changed things. Not quite as many ducks as there used to be, and cranes I think are fewer, fewer cranes.

There was a little lake back there and little channel, narrow channel, just wide enough for a river boat to go in there. And we used to go into this little lake and sometimes do a little fishing there when but right on the corner of that, where that creek goes in and, on the bank there we'd have a, have a cookout you know, build a fire there and have a cookout. Now the willows are really tall there, and a beaver feed pile drifted down, drifted down the creek and plugged that, plugged that up that little channel there about that wide where the waters come out through all that beaver feed pile. You cannot even get in there now.

Subtheme: Enjoyment of Nature/Scenery

Wildlife was viewed as a source of intrinsic enjoyment. Viewing animals in their habitat was highly valued among Lake Minchumina residents. While residents saw a need for harvest of local fur and ungulate species, the ability to have animals of all types present and living was a source of personal fulfillment. Simple activities, such as rock collecting and bird watching were considered subsistence activities where subsistence was more defined as living in tandem with the natural environment.

I think it is more an appreciation for where we live and the other lives that we share it with. And, it seems to me to be very ordinary to live in a place where you see swans almost daily and bald eagles, and yet I'm increasingly aware of it. That is not really very common for most people. I mean if you see swans they're in a park, or if you want to see bald eagles you have to go someplace special to do it. So, I've always enjoyed watching wildlife, and it doesn't have to be big wildlife; it is always fun seeing a moose or a bear, but I also like seeing caterpillars.

To us, just subsistence is that, that connectedness with the land and just the time and the space to enjoy that and to understand that.

But, subsistence, I do not think wildlife viewing is technically a part of subsistence, but it is certainly a strong part of our lifestyle. And even though we do not eat bald eagles and we do not do anything with the feathers or anything just seeing them, they are a part of our life. And flowers in the spring, I'm thinking mostly wild flowers, these are mostly domestic, but when the wild flowers come back, I know most of their names, but even when I do not know the name, it is like seeing an old friend, coming back to visit for the summer.

I built that all by myself like I always do... But now with log work there is a tremendous satisfaction, taking something from the woods and creating something, something that belongs, looks like it belongs there when you get done, and not an ugly plywood box or, to me it is ugly anyways, plywood...

But there [are] beaches, rocks, I call green rocks and web stones, make jewelry. But I appreciate, oh get tons of eagle feathers, and I just even like when you, a kill site, I love to like and, who killed this, why, what happened, you know, it is always so interesting.

I can entertain myself for hours. Even, even in the city in a parking lot I'll sit and look at rocks.

I think it is fun to see what you got and kind of like we was talking about fishing. You know you do not know what you are going to have or how many you are going to have. I think that parts fun. And then I think just the traveling through the woods and the scenery's fun.

I mean people, to me a place of rest and refuge, kind of like we were created to live in a garden. We were, and so we have this continual longing to be next to nature, to be involved with it in some way.

Do you know I am so good I can go at 40 below and sit for 1 hour straight. That is good! I mean to sit, I know, and it just, I know, I have my chair, but I have a, you know, all warmth. I have my bunny boots, and I just put a blanket and my nocks, and I count satellites and of course the aurora.... Satellite flybys, the aurora, all the different stuff.

I love to see stuff. And I love to listen to the birds. But anyway and I have to, it was like, what was that? I was up on the back road going to town, and I was like what the hell is that? It is not like walking like a fox, and it was a wolverine! And then we saw tracks over here, because I love looking at tracks too, I love to track things. I tracked a rabbit one time all the way from up there there are nice little homes up there, and all the way from up there it went all the way down to the beach. Who knew?

Birds in particular were mentioned as being a source of enjoyment.

We like the eagles. I've always wanted to see an eagle get a fish. I see them circling out there, you know, hunting for fish, but I never seen them actually catch one.

We have falcons here too. They're really neat.

[I] watch [the birds] and read up on them, and if we see anything any different, you know, any different kinds of birds, and there are sometimes, there are different ones going through, coming. And the geese are my babies. I do not want anybody hunting them but they do. And I watch these babies grow up all summer long and do not hunt my babies.

I love the cranes when they leave. I mean it is sad but it is always right around my birthday and they circle and oh sometimes the whole sky and you go to the lake and run to the lake and it is just, dark, with the cranes and it depends on the weather and all and, you know, taking off and the migration it is like so cool. That is magical. I love that.

Two participants viewed the traditional use of dog sled as a more natural way to connect with nature.

I grew up with dogs, with dog teams, and of course we did a lot of walking, snowshoeing, trapping, which I really love to snowshoe, but, or dogs, either one, but you talk about really being connected with your surroundings because of the silence, the sounds, the smells, with dogs. You get in tune with the animals themselves.

So the dogs are a really big part of our life and, and in some ways our lives revolve around them, and we wrote a whole book just on dog mushing. It is become pretty well known.

I think I trap because I have dogs. It is a reason to have dogs. And to travel. We are traveling all winter with the dogs from cabin to cabin out on the trapline or tent camps or whatever. And then if we're at home we're going back and forth to the post office or to check the fish nets, we almost always take the dogs for that.

But people...quit using dogs because for as far as cost, dogs are kind of expensive or they involve a great deal of your time to keep them. To go on you if either you have to buy the feed or you spend a lot of time putting up fish and stuff for them. But there is no comparison as far as companionship and everything on the trail, but, but I do not think we'll ever have another team at this phase in life.

Living in tandem with the natural environment was considered to be an important component of the lifestyle of residents. Harvesting wild game, growing gardens, and

being aware of the changing seasons were only a few of the elements mentioned. Other characteristics, such as an interest in the winter season and its activities, allowed individuals to travel and explore more easily.

It is like a circle of life to do [subsistence] though. From one thing to the next. Whatever's open that is what we're doing. That is, it is fishing season we're fishing. It is hunting season, we're hunting. Caribou and moose. Trapping season, I'm putting traps out.

Probably open spaces maybe. You know when you get to Fairbanks city. You know. Restaurants, stop lights, so I think when you hear the word Lake Minchumina, it would be less crowded or open, does that make sense?

I like winter. One thing I really like about winter is you can go anywhere.

Especially if you do not have too much snow. Which we usually we do not. Once in a while you get so much snow you have to stick pretty much to the trails. But most of the winters usually you can go in the snow.

We used to, there a little lake back there and little channel, narrow channel, just wide enough for a river boat to go in there. And we used to go into this little lake and sometimes do a little fishing there when, but right on the corner of that, where that creek goes in and, on the bank there we'd have a, have a cookout you know, build a fire there and have a cookout.

Some residents expressed a frustration with newcomers and their town mentalities of molding the environment to fit their needs versus working with the environment and changing themselves to fit with the land. This mentality was mentioned through unwarranted tree removal and hunting for nonsubsistence purposes. Living with the land meant harvest for resource use and not for aesthetic or sport hunting purposes.

That is something with people that come from town and you, we try and go slow and work and teach that, that you see the differences that they try to impose themselves, or force their will, upon the land...I do not need to cut everything. I do not need to turn it into all, a giant lawn... but it is hard to educate that, go slow, slow down and, and evaluate each tree. Do not just cut them all down. Some are healthy. Or some are less. Some are going to go. Take the ones that because over time those things happen around you as it is and work with the seasons and with the changes but, but sometimes your, you get, town promotes a faster type of response and energy and to, you know, get in there and you make things happen. You are told that it is about you.

Most of the people here are here; they want to be here, they want to stay here.

And you have people that come out from town with their guns blazing, and they want to kill something, and then as soon they got something it is back to town. They do not want to stay in this god forsaken country. They just come out and assault the wilderness, and that is their mindset, and the problem is that they think they have the right to come out and do that. Which they do. And where is the people that live there all the time and love the land and try to work with it?

That is more of a sport and recreation lifestyle. My father used to always say people would come up here to get away from the rat race, move to Alaska, and then they would say they no sooner get here than they want to create it just like the place they left. And you see that to some degree here. There is been people who came here, mentally they never left where they came from, and they just try to create the same mess they had there. And they usually fail and leave. But leave a mess behind.

...this guy [who came to hunt] he had a big sausage making factory in Germany, and he was very typical German and he looked, very strict you know and stern looking, and when he came, and I thought, oh boy, this is going to be difficult... and down around this corner is an old gold mine, and we camped there for a couple days and he's, he asked me one evening, he says he says, he says, are you satisfied with the life that you live, and I said yeah, very much so. And he says, what if you found a great big piece of gold worth millions of dollars, he says, what would you do with it? And I say, well, I says, I'd help my children, and I'd says I'd probably use the rest of it to help other people. And he says, that is fascinating that, that you can be that way! He says he was just so fascinated with the idea that, that you could be satisfied with very little because he had a lot and he was not happy.

It is like [our neighbor] said, the subsistence is a privilege because you get to live in these pretty unique areas, but you have to have the right feeling about being in this area because you cannot, certain people do not like it here.

We live with that and you try not to, that is the other thing is people who develop a culture of when there are changes or problems of anger over that or, just, you need to look at that and go, okay now how can I look at that or what maybe are there positive things that can come out of that too. You need to really develop that attitude of I guess working with the land there again. Instead of fighting against it because some people that is too, changes too much too agitating too difficult for them to deal with these constant. They like something more rigid and structured and constant.

Back to the lifestyle again. And for me you know, you catch, you work hard to catch something and then, then there is pride in being able to handle the fur well you know, so that you have a finished product and then it, the ultimate satisfaction is in, if you get it tanned or tan it yourself and then make it into something you can use. Then you've kind of gone the full cycle, so. It is never been about

numbers for us. And it isn't for [our neighbors] or [our other neighbor] either. Whereas we've got a few people who've come out and boy, and I do not understand it is kind of like sport hunting, which I do not really understand, so all about we gotta just catch everything we can catch, and, and like the money was important and the money, and these are people who have money, so I do not really understand why its such a big deal that they're just driven to get the maximum, and as soon as they're done, they're gone. Do they ever notice anything?

I would like to believe that we are stewards. When God created he said have dominion, but the word dominion doesn't meant dominate, it means being a steward, there is a big difference. And so that is why I answered that question saying I am not really like to be considered a Christian because I think people mostly think of Christians as right-wing fanatics that do not really care about the environment, that man dominates, and I think that is wrong to believe that way that we are on this planet, and if we want to stay on this planet, we better take care of it. So, I am God-sufficient in the fact that I believe, well, you can call it a greater being or God or whatever, whoever, the creation of all this lovely fish and berries and medicinal and edible plants. I didn't grow them, so how can I call myself self-sufficient?

Individuals expressed a deep sense of identity with Lake Minchumina as a place where they felt the most comfortable and knew how to connect due to their knowledge of the area and its resources versus town mentalities and activities.

I couldn't imagine living if I couldn't live here. I'd live in Ester, but then I cannot even imagine the winters there in town. Here they're like, you know, it is fine, no biggy, but all those, the car, the smoke, Oh that, I mean, you know, the pollution, ohhh!

I'm really lucky because what I've wanted was always right here. And when we first got out of high school and said well, we're just going to live at Lake Minchumina, and we're going to live off the land and whatever we have to do to live there, and our mother said well that is fine, but sooner or later you are going to get tired of it, and that was over 30 years ago, and I haven't gotten tired of it yet.

I just like being out here even though I've got lots of people coming and visiting me, so even though I'm out here by myself, I do not lack for people and contacts, and I'm not like running away from the world. I do not mind sharing. So, that is pretty much me, for 45 years, and I probably will end up just living here and walking away into the woods if things, if I come down with some cancer or something, I'll just enjoy it out here.

When I go to Fairbanks and I'm there for more than about a week, I start feeling like I'm losing my sense of identity. And I might go for a walk and, and feel like I'm just floating aimlessly, and I'm not grounded. And I just, lose a sense of who I am and what am I doing and why I am walking downtown Fairbanks and, and it just doesn't work for me. And, and when I'm out here, I'm just grounded, and I know who I am and what has to get done and what has to get done right now and what has to get done by tomorrow and what has to get done by next week or the end of the summer or before freeze up or, I just know. And when I'm in Fairbanks I do not know.

Subtheme: Connections to Place Through Time

The word "home" was used to describe participant's place connections to Lake Minchumina.

If you are where you really feel at home, and you are able to think about, and that is what keeps our brains active and alive, and that is what even though Lisa was living in Michigan most of her life, she was able to adjust here with the same knowledge that she used in Michigan but to the different plants, they are not that all different, they are not, but she shot rabbits there... but also had a job, had an 8 to 5 job. Here if you can adjust your eating habits, you hardly have to buy anything.

So this is home. You know. And we always said if we found some place better we'd go, but we never did.

Home I guess. I mean now that is what we would think. Ah, we're finally home... Once in a great while you know, if I'm not ready to come home I'll go ohhh. But no. If we didn't feel that way we probably wouldn't come. Because we do not have to be here.

...people said why did you move back to Minchumina, but we didn't move home; it is just that we stopped going away to school. And Julie and I have always been very attached to this place, and when I say this place I do not just mean this house, which is invaluable to us, and not just this property, which I just have very deep roots in, but everything from here to the mountain, 60 or 70 miles away, that is like our front yard. And you could take me and blind fold me and put me in a helicopter and take me 30 miles out there and drop me off, and if I could see the mountain, and if I had a compass, I could get home without any trouble, other than wet feet and swimming rivers. I could find my way home.

Main Theme: Health

The positive aspects of utilizing vegetation for medicinal purposes was mentioned by several participants. The medicinal uses included various wild species of plants as well as berries and rose hips collected for vitamins and general health.

That is another passion of mine is putting up health food and medicinal foods. So there is Artemisia and coltsfoot, and maybe I can show you some others, but I'm sure that where everybody lives they need to know their local plants and find out what is good because when coltsfoot was used by the Natives and it, for pneumonia, and they tried to cure tuberculosis with it.

And so anyway my passion is passing it on, and I'm always sending it in the mail to people who are sick and they say, oh that really helped me, you know how people get into elderberries or you learn the medicinal plants in your area...

Blueberries and strawberries and cranberries and rose hips, I do not like to eat a lot of them, but I like to have some as opposed to buying supplements. It makes a difference, you can tell. You can tell when you are eating, when you are out cutting wood every day, 20 to 30 below, you can tell when you do not have the right food.

I like my shrooms. And that is why I want to get into ethnobotony. The medicinal purposes of the combstooth and all, there is different ones even in our little area that grow here that are so highly prized and worth a lot of money and so. And they're good for ya. So, because like the combstooth that is been shown to it, there working with it to extract whatever colon cancers what was the other things, colon cancer and something else. And here Dan had colon, colon rectal cancer. And I would give him mushrooms all the time.

Summary of Lake Minchumina

Community in rural areas held the common theme of sharing as being an important element in regards to both resources, such as meat, as well as knowledge. Socializing and sharing in similar lifestyles with others was important to Lake Minchumina. Additionally, participants mentioned the loss of community, in particular the lack of returning youth, which affected the population growth of the area. Lastly, the

community was seen as having a restorative element where friendships held great value. Finances were another large theme mentioned by participants. The lack of employment in a rural community resulted in a greater reliance on local resources such as trapping. Despite the high costs and low income associated with living in rural places, individuals mentioned that living a rural lifestyle was far more valuable than having consistent income. Historical connections to place was mentioned through longevity in an area, changes that came to Alaska in the 60s and 70s, and the resulting “back to the land” movement of the 70s that brought an influx of people into the bush. Family connectedness was strong for couples who valued their time spent together and in passing values down to children and grandchildren. Connection to place, for some participants, was generational. Freedom was a theme amongst individuals who valued the unique lifestyle of living with few restrictions, a lack of social expectations, not needing to depend on general society as well as having the ability to dictate one’s own schedule. Resource dependence was found through the communities’ reliance on wood, meat, and harvested plants. The lake was also seen as a refuge, a place for individuals to be that provided protection. Frugality was highly valued amongst participants. The value in not wasting food or resources and living within one’s means was strong. Individuals mentioned being influenced by parents who had lived through the Depression era and the similarities in values that they shared with Native concepts of no waste and respect for game. Solitude held value and was treated as a theme by the researcher due to its repetitive motif throughout the interview process. Quietness was therefore valued as having healing properties as well as enforcing one’s ability to connect with the natural world. Technology was a theme seen as having negative effects on an individual’s ability

to connect with nature, such as in the case of dog mushing versus snowmachining and the impact of computers and TV on youth. Lastly, connectedness to nature was a strong theme with many subthemes relating to resource dependence, having strong local ecological knowledge (LEK), finding personal enjoyment in wildlife observation, and valuing the way in which one lives in tandem with the land. A negative subtheme relating to nature connectedness was an expressed frustration with newcomers who did not have similar respect for the land as local residents.

Cantwell

Main Themes

Changes to the Cantwell culture and lifestyle were mentioned frequently throughout the interviews. The creation of the Parks Highway in the form of increased hunting competition from Fairbanks and Anchorage residents, political management from Ahtna as well as state and federal management agencies, and the social changes and mentalities brought on by technology and the influx of newcomers to the area were common themes.

Main Theme: Nature/Place Connectedness

Cantwell participants expressed a strong appreciation for the natural environment. A strong connection to wildlife, particularly caribou and the natural scenery, was expressed. Participants expressed the enjoyment they received not only harvesting fish and game, but having the opportunity to view wildlife and be outside. Cantwell was seen as a very unique and special place that individuals were drawn to not only for its rare

beauty, but also for the memories that had been built up over time.

Subtheme: City versus Rural

Participants lamented the influx of outsiders from Fairbanks and Anchorage during the hunting season. Outsiders were viewed as not having a respectful attitude toward wildlife and the surrounding natural environment. Participants felt that there was too much concentrated drain on the local resources as well as competition with locals.

I do not blame people from Anchorage coming up here. There [are] no other roads in this state. If they would, if the Natives and the State and the Fed would get out of the way and let them punch some roads into some of these communities around the state. I hate like heck to see the place get, it is never, you know you cannot just have an influx of people and keep piling them into one area on one little road system you know and turn the rest of this thing into some kind of museum.

Denali Highway, it is the only place to go. So what do you expect? But they come out there I mean it is just flooded out there right now, not right but it will be pretty soon. It'll be like Grand Central Station what the hell, it is everywhere.

Since we live on the Denali, come hunting season, oh my God, the stream of traffic on the Denali is unbelievable. Constant. Just going by with their pickups, with their trailers with their four-wheelers and their boats.

Anchorage everybody's up here hunting, as well, you figure out another spot for them to go? You know, they pay ya whatever we have to pay with them for taxes or nothing, but I mean in their own they support the state and stuff, and they keep it rolling you know. But yeah they come in here in droves you know from all over.

The city people coming out here. Personally, I do not like them. They have the right to the animals just as much as we do, but we depend on the meat more. It is not just a sport to go out and harvest a caribou or moose, it is meat, you know, it is food. But they have the right, you know, whether I like it or not, which actually I do not.

What made me mad was it, they also had it any bull, moose permit that you could apply for and that was like it for elders, and I figured, hell, I'm in my forties, I'm not an elder I can still find a moose on my own, I do not need the tag, but I applied for it when I turned 50. Boom, I got it, and then the next year this hunt is above chit can, no more tier two. What the hell is that? You are shit canning

Alaskans. And they want outside people coming here and shooting because they're paying big money to apply. Well, but if you look at half of your guides in this state, they're from another state too. They're taking it; that money's not staying here.

Subtheme: Resource Dependence

Subsistence activities were a way for individuals to connect to the outdoors, to feel connected to the cycle of resource use and dependence on the land.

...like the trapping lifestyle, I kind of miss that... I wish more people would do it because that is part of our predator control you know. The wolves unfortunately eat the same things that we do. But I feel like you know, hey we're the top of the food chain, you know. I do not want to see bears or the wolves wiped out at all, you know they have a place here on the earth too, but we do not need as many as we have. Because we all like to eat moose and caribou. And that was my big thing when I was trapping was predator control as far as harvesting wolves you know...they were desirable for value, you know, to sell them. But those were my pretty much my targeted animal.

I liked it right here because there is everything here you know. Short of whales and polar bears, it's pretty much here. Fish, berries, wildlife, and the beauty of it. I mean there [are] people [who] spend thousands of dollars just to come look at [the scenery].

And it is lifestyle as well because I know a lot of people up here, especially the Natives, they have eaten wild meat all their lives. And when I was younger the Natives would just cook up caribou. I mean just cook strips of caribou and that was it. They would have caribou and oh maybe one other thing, maybe they would have bread, make bread, and caribou, and they wouldn't have vegetables, and that was their mainstay was that wild meat.

Harvesting local vegetation and fish was frequently mentioned as being valued both personally and as by others in the community.

We did eat some pike, like the 4-foot long pikes that we'd catch? And then you bake them and it was just like turkey or something I mean, and the white bones and everything, it would just fall off the bones, and it was, the texture was like turkey meat or something. It was really good.

When the willows came back were coming, first budding up, the buds on them you know, before they flower up, we'd always get a bunch of them just to pop

them things off you know, and they were full of vitamin C and stuff. We'd make salads out of them you know take them.

Being out at the cabin yeah we did a lot of mushrooms, the puff balls and stuff, because they would dry good you know. And they were good in stews and stuff. A lot of the Native folks from town will come up here and pick blueberries and cranberries, and so anytime you see vehicles parked alongside the highway, Parks Highway, and see people out in the fields, they're usually the Native folks

Subtheme: Knowledge of Wildlife/Seasons

Having a strong understanding of wildlife and the cyclical changes of the local environments acted as a bonding element for participants.

When the caribou would come through, it was this huge group, and I could just sit on the bank and watch them migrate across the ice. And they would go up on the bank, and they would just kind of paw around to get down to the vegetation. And they would go hour after hour, and it was so quiet you couldn't hear anything but the crunching of the snow as they walked along really slow. That was beautiful. That is not going to happen anymore. I guess those are just memories now.

Because it is doing like chess moves. I do not know how to play chess, but it is just like you have to know exactly what they're doing otherwise that they have such good eyes.

I feel that he feels that he is doing good, which I think he is. Instead of shooting a bear he said he'd rather use those rubber bullets to scare it away. And I applaud that because there is too many that would just shoot it in a heartbeat. You know it is just passing through; it is gone in a day.

The herd was taken down to just a bare, I mean it was unbelievable how low the herd had gotten. And I know they have got different herds. They have got the Denali herd, the Nelchina herd, they have got herds all over. But they took that herd down so much by misjudging on how many there were to begin with. And I thought, all the things that a poor caribou has to endure, it about makes me want to give up on ever eating caribou meat.

I just have always had a love of animals. I hate to see anything suffer. I mean if you are going to kill it, kill it outright. If you are going to eat it, fine, but just do it in a humane way. Do not make it suffer.

One individual highly valued a hunter's knowledge of game harvest and preparation. Working hard to find and harvest the meat was considered to be

showing respect and fairness as a hunter.

To me an airplane is unfair. It doesn't give the animal half a chance. The law is 12 hours you gotta sit and wait after it landing in an airplane, but that should be 3 days. You should have to because that way the animal has a chance to wander off somewhere else.

You gotta respect the animal. But you are earning it you know. And the guy upstairs is letting it happen for ya. But, if a moose shows itself to ya, it was during the hunting season that is; there it is, there is your meat.

I help him too, just because he's my brother in law, and he shoots a moose. Okay we throw it in his truck, and he drives to town, drops it off, and has it cut and wrapped. That do not subsistence. I've got the money to do that too but that is, that is not subsistence. You do not even know that you are getting your same meat back. So that is my other deal with it. I know what I got in that freezer.

What I see is all these four-wheelers...up and down the trail up and down the trail, back and forth. The key to hunting is to sit still and observe. Watch for movement. Not four-wheelers moving back and forth. That is why I go so far back; I try to get away from everybody. That is not hunting because, and one of them is going to get lucky and they're going to spook one up. I call that just shit house luck. You know, you just spooked one from all the activity. But I like sitting on a hill... hey beautiful and then you look around, oh where'd he come from? He was there the whole time. It just took patience, you know, that is the other part. Patience and time.

It's more sport to them, you know, it is. I think the subsistence is kind of losing its meaning, you know. Because myself, and I, this is just me, I would never hunt just for sport. For one thing you do not want to get this huge moose with this huge rack because he's old, you know, I mean it is not, it is really not going to be very good meat.

Changes to local hunting regulations and the increased pressure on local resources through community hunts were viewed negatively by locals. While hunting in itself was not viewed negatively, disrespecting the local environment in what many locals felt was overhunting was mentioned as a component of knowledge.

I'm not a biologist, but I know how they breed, when they can breed; they have messed up that unit for the next 10 years. To have a young moose population. It is going to take that long to bring that back. Those are all any bull tags, that which means they're small and medium, not large. They got no young moose population they just wiped it out. So that may just end the moose season there forever.

So now they have just kind of opened up to anybody as far as I know. I mean, if you've got a hunting license and, yeah, it is definitely just I think been mismanaged. And it is just saddening to us because you know we value the wilderness and the wildlife, and even though we're not huge conservationists like oh, do not ever shoot Bambi, you know that is, you never do that. We do not feel that way at all. It is wow, you've just got to manage it so that they are not completely slaughtered, and it seems what we see, from our perspective, happening around here that it is, turns into a slaughter.

Like I was saying before when we went out on that trip we saw more caribou gut piles than we saw live caribou. And there were gut pile all over. And we saw very few. We should've seen hundreds of caribou and yeah, most of them were dead. It used to be back in the before, before, before our time, used to be lots of big herd of caribou used to come through here. Come through here towards, towards McKinley Park you know.

I stood in the middle of that Nelchina Herd when it was at an estimated over 150,000 animals and between wolf and bear predation and the early hunting of that herd when I first came up in 65, you could take 6 caribou after, later it was dropped to 3. I mean, between man, wolf, and bear the numbers fell drastically. Appropriate connections to the land involved responsible harvest and awareness of local wildlife and their seasonal, and in some cases yearly, cycles of high and low population densities.

Farm it like we was talking earlier. You cannot, if you do that then it knocks off your whole pattern you know. Like I say it is like book, like I always have different species and then I have the dates that they came through. We'd caught a few lynx when the rabbits were really high hear a few years ago. And just for making, still making some hats and stuff we still got...a dozen lynx or so upstairs probably. Hats and stuff to sell.

But, like right now, you know if you are hungry this is the to, if you really need them to eat something, the hides are no good so I never do it, but every once in a while you run into something even late in the spring, like the hide's still good in a lot of places into June. It is not open but you gotta, always gotta a chance of getting a female that is pregnant, and you do not want to do that you know.

One individual expressed a great sense of pride regarding his level of LEK and his ability to contribute to the community.

' The funny thing the biologists in Glennallen are giving my number to people that are calling. Call this guy, he lives over there. He knows more than we do about the caribou. And they tell me that on the phone and I say well yeah the, you know, I'm not saying I know more than they know, but I know where the caribou are at this time of year. And that is just from, being out there. Well I'm out there like

200 days out of the year doing something. Out, out of Cantwell you know. On the four-wheeler or a snowmachine or a truck.

Subtheme: Enjoyment of Nature/Scenery

For many being outdoors, seeing the wildlife, and experiencing the beauty of the area was the goal of subsistence and not solely for the harvest of game. Participants used words such as “love,” “beauty,” and “lucky” to describe living close to the natural environment.

I do not have to kill anything. I enjoy the meat. But as far as that being the main goal, of a hunting trip, no, just being out there is beneficial.

Awesome. It was awesome. You are out there, usually by yourself and sometimes you are on a trail, sometimes you are not, you hear the breathing of the dogs, crunch of the snow on the runners. I do not know, it was cool. Good way to travel. I traveled alone and with people sometimes. It was fun man, we had good adventures. Also used them for trapping. And then just so I could be outdoors... I miss them you know, especially in the spring time. Those long spring days when the snow is hard and you can cruise.

One time he went out caribou hunting, and he shot a caribou on the lake. There was ice on the lake at that time, and he shot the caribou, and the vapor went up from the hole. It was a cold morning, and the vapor went out of the body, but my dad looked at that vapor and he said it just felt like it was the spirit of the animal leaving, and it really moved him, and he said you know what, I do not want to hunt anymore. It just really hit him all of a sudden that he was taking the life of a beautiful animal.

I've always had a lot of empathy for animals. I mean from a very young age that I would cry if something was dead. I've always really been concerned about animals and rescuing animals all the time.

It used to be that I could go and sit on the bank and watch the birds and I have slew water that comes around from the stream. Trumpeter swans have their babies, the ducks have their babies. This is another thing, is that I've always been able to watch the moose that come and eat the vegetation off the bottom. They kind of slosh through it. We had river otters, a family of five, and the next spring they were on hats that a local person was making. They trapped them. I loved watching them. They were so playful. And I mean all the things, the beavers swims by every night at 9 o'clock, and then there is a muskrat that swims past.

I love to snowshoe in the winter. And so my brother and I would go snowshoeing. And just go over one hill after another and then just look at the whole panorama, and it was just beautiful, absolutely beautiful.

You get to know the country pretty well you know. I've spent the last 50 years here so, you know, but hey every mountain's a little different from the next one, you know. Hey where I had a hard time navigating was down in the flat country where it was all checkerboard, you know, and everything looked exactly the same. Because it is, you know, a lot of the checkerboard stuff looks the same for miles and miles. There it isn't too much different but the mountains got a lot of personality really. They, it is not too many of them that look exactly the same if you look at them very hard. And the ones around here kind of like old friends; you just get to know them.

We had a Christmas and... it was like a scene out of Norman Rockwell thing. I remember sitting there in the cabin with tree or whatever, you know, we had a little dinky thing there and stuff and...I was wow man, this is like something. This is pretty cool.

The scenery, for one thing, yeah. I love having the, the mountains as close, close as they are, you know, I mean it is kind of, kind of like a I never realized this until, until I went outside, you know, I lived in, Salt Lake City, and you know places like that where there really was not, you know, mountains you know close like they are here. It is kind of like a security blanket. You feel protected you know like nobody could sneak up on ya kind of thing.

It is really neat to be out snow machining, and you come upon you know, like a big bull moose that is laying down and he's, he's let the snow kind of cover him up and then you, you come, you know, like over a rise or something like that you, and all of a sudden boom he's right there...I mean we do not, do not chase them, we do not mean to disturb them; it is just something that is like there is one of those that not everybody gets to see.

I love the miraculous. I love the wonder. Taking a walk out there and seeing an especially beautiful leaf or a pretty rock or you know and maybe it is being an artist that, you know, being visual, you see all these colors and patterns. And it just affects me so with awe that, and I do not want to give that up. I do not want to stop being awed. I want to always be awed by all that beauty that is out there. And beauty is very special to me.

I find myself daydreaming, like has anybody ever stepped right here before. I think about things like that. Most of it, that is what's going through my head. Has anybody walked over this hill before me? Has anybody ever looked at this before I seen it? Or pick it up and then throw it back on the ground?

I love the mountains. I cannot think of a prettier place because the mountains you

just, they're so close you feel like you could reach out and touch them. You could, oh I could climb that today, I could climb that one today, and it is just that feeling that you are so close to them and they're so beautiful and every day they change. I have enormous love for the earth, for plants, insects, animals, the birds. I do not interact with the fishes much, but I do interact with all the other stuff, and I greatly appreciate them. I think they're absolutely beautiful and the earth is an incredible place to be. It is so beautiful and so full of miraculous, well it is just a wonder and I think we're very lucky to live on this planet.

When I first moved on that homestead, the sweeping views of the Talkeetnas across the lake and, and you know we're on lake, you know, Drashner Lake out there. And it was just astounding I thought. People will pay thousands of dollars to have a view like this and, you know, here I am so blessed to, this is my home where this fantastic view is. And I could look out there any day of the week any time of day, even at night, it was so beautiful. And at night, you know, we do see, this is a good viewing place for the Northern Lights, and I love the northern lights and, so all that beauty, it is the beauty, that has me here.

We were kind of enjoying seeing them up until that point. I mean you know it was interesting. I was telling you that I would see them occasionally when I was hiking with the dog and...you might find that [one] was watching you...and I kind of thought it was cool to hear them yipping at night.

You feel better after you get out of the, get out of the house or cabin or whatever for, after you been locked up for a week at 50 below. And it is like, all right it is 10 below, I'm going out here, it is warmed you know, yeah, so you have to go out and do something. Even just go out and cut a load of wood, firewood.

It is always about the beauty of Alaska, and you know I do a lot of wildlife stuff, and so that is why I'm here. These mountains, I love the mountains, and these mountains are so rugged and so beautiful. They're always changing, the lighting effects on them, the colors on them. It is just for the kind of artist that I am, the kind of art I like to produce, I'm here because of the beauty. That is what it is. And I try to capture that in my art.

I mean the Rockies are not even mountains compared to what we got you know. You can see they're mountains. But if you live in Alaska, that are not no mountains.

I mean any day in the woods or the beaches is better than any day inside, any day is what I say.

While subsistence hunting was important to participants, several individuals mentioned it as a secondary activity to the priority of simply being outdoors and enjoying the natural

environment.

It is just so nice and because God, you know, he made so many amazing things, he make you just want to watch and you know, instead of hunting it. Not like, you say, pulling the triggers not special, it is just being out there, you know, communing with God's environment, you know, kind of deal.

Neither one of us enjoy pulling a trigger on an animal. I've done it several times, but I would just assume let somebody else do that if that is what they like to do. I would be glad to have the meat. I'll help you haul it out, or I'll help you whatever, but I do not really want to kill it. Yeah the first moose I killed it was this most odd feeling because you are in that mode, and you know that is what you are supposed to do, and oh my gosh now this animal's here, and you are supposed to shoot it, and then you shoot, and then you are not so sure, like your instinct is to try to do something to save it. You know, it is like oh, what did I just do?

I mean, if we want meat, we can get meat in the grocery store you know, and obviously it is not as healthy and that's just the, the eating them is not our big priority. But we sure love seeing them around.

[Hunting is] an outdoor activity that I enjoy that puts food in the freezer. You know, so it is beneficial all the way around. It is yeah, it is just a win-win situation you know. I mean how could you not enjoy a nice sunny day up there on the hill? Just picking blueberries and, yeah, maybe run into a moose on the way down or something like that you know, or whatever. It is the opportunities you after and then the other added benefits on the side that you weren't even, like, you know, anticipating.

And I'll be doing it as long as I can do it. Hopefully it doesn't come to where I'm doing it in a wheel chair. I'll have a four wheel drive one by then if it comes to that. Or I'll have to make one. And I told my boys that I says if it comes to me, you guys put me in a truck you are putting me in, I'm going to be there.

I was thinking the value of them to us is not so much as meat, not that we're opposed to eating them for meat because we have, but it is probably more important if we had to make a choice between having them to eat or having them just having them, I would definitely say I'd rather them be able to survive and be around and have them around.

In a way I'm sort of for me if I go someplace hunting really the, the thrill isn't pulling the trigger the thrill is being out there long enough and figuring out how to find it. So... taking it is almost anticlimactic.

You can climb to the top of that hill there and might take you all day and find out that that ram you were looking at was just about this much too short, so, it is like, nope, sorry cannot take them. But you know, but it would still be enjoyable.

Absolutely. I mean, it is just being out there you know. I mean how could you not enjoy a day like this? Even though it is a lot of work to get to the top of that mountain I mean you know... I've never been much of a going to the mall and shopping for entertainment like some people are, but...that never appealed to me. I guess as far as an enjoyable relaxing activity hunting, fishing, trapping, just the outdoor activities.

One participant focused on the joy she received from exploring the nearby mountain ranges with her husband and their dogs. During the interview the participant expressed at one point that the reason she moved to Cantwell was for its beauty.

On this climb here, we basically did this whole ridge back here...friend of ours dropped us off, and we did the whole ridge, and we'd always have a choice between following caribou tracks or sheep tracks. And if we'd follow the sheep tracks we'd always get in a jam. We came back and found the caribou because the sheep would go where you couldn't go. They would end up where you couldn't go. Where the caribou are more cautious. And that was a lot of fun.

We only had three dogs when we came here, all pet dogs. And then sort of the natural thing when we got here was accumulating sled dog. Because one of my biggest clients is a dog musher, so very easy to come by sled dogs, and you know realizing that this is sled dog heaven. I mean, yeah, you cannot live in Cantwell and not have some part of that.

Probably the thing that we love doing here the most is exploring this country, whether we're hiking on top of Reindeer, and we always have our dogs with us. And one of the reasons why we were attracted to this area number one, the mountains were very close, and when we were in Kenai we used to drive at least 45 minutes to get to the mountains to go climb you know or get that exercise, and here we knew we could have a mountain in our backyard, and we spent a lot of time out there hiking, and it gives us just the open spaces; our dogs can run free and stay out of trouble.

It is just awesome to have a place where you can feel safe. Our dogs are pretty well behaved too. I mean you couldn't just take any pack of dogs out there and turn them loose, but that is one of the things that I mean we realize we have here that very, very, very few places can do something like that.

Another individual expressed her great sense of compassion for the land and the value of having protected resources for future enjoyment. Valuing place as a wilderness and having that place protected was important for her. Even though she was unable to explore

the natural areas like she had been able to during her younger years, having the knowledge that these places existed were enough to give her joy.

The reason I love mountains so much and like the Talkeetnas over here that are so rugged is I can look out there, and look say from, even from the base, those mountains are so rugged and so hard to get into and as you look up into those bowls and that people do not get up there. And that makes me feel really good that there are some places on the earth where people do not walk.

Beauty, natural beauty is very important to me. I'm a wildlife artist and I love, I'm here in Alaska because it is just, still so full of wilderness and so filled with wildlife and that is very important to me. And even if I do not see anything, I have to know in my heart that what I call it is on the edge of the wilderness, and you know we're right there where the pavement ends for the Denali Highway, and then you are on that scenic highway the rest of the way. And I do not get out in much anymore, I do not hike the way I used to, but I need to know that I live still where there is wilderness. That is very important to me.

Enormous love. And by that love I do not mean that romantic you know man woman kind of love; it is the greater love you know, I've, my own personal spiritual beliefs is we are surrounded by love, we are love, we are immersed in it. And most of the time, most of us forget to tap into that and feel it. And it really helps me to feel it when I look out at the natural world. It reminds me you know, that really the earth is a very deeply spiritual place, and there is a lot of places on the earth that people very connected to because they resonate with it somehow. It is their particular spot they need to be. And that is kind of how I am about Cantwell. This is my particular spot where I need to be.

I love people, and I care about people, but I think we also need to have some places on the earth where it is too tough for people to go, you know. It should be pristine just the way it is. Without people, you know, making trails through it and all of that. Yeah, and that, this is why I love the park system, I mean not only Denali, but parks all over, wherever they are. I think that is, that was such an incredible idea. And wow, what a gift. For instance that park system is one way to ensure there is some parts of the earth hopefully are going to still be there seven generations from now.

I believe in the future and I love the earth and I think the earth is a very special place. The fact that, or so we're told, that humankind now has the power, or has had the power for some time to be able to annihilate life on earth, is horrifying to me. I can remember being in the seventh grade, which was back in the, no, maybe freshman, back in the 60s. And Cold War and whatnot going on, and people building bomb shelters. And we talked about, okay if we had to go down in a bomb shelter, what would we take with you? And so, different people had different ideas of what would be a good idea, and we learned about nuclear winter

and all that kind of stuff. And I said, I'm not going down. I'm going to sit on top and let it come because what are you going to come to? You cannot come out of your bomb shelter and be okay, I mean, the rest of the earth is not okay.

I feel very good that, you know, development isn't going to come in here and put up apartment buildings or something. And I just need to know that it is there; I do not have to see it, I just need to know that there is places where we will preserve the pieces of the earth just the way it developed you know. It developed naturally, the plants that grew there, the animals that came in. And it will go on and keep going on, hopefully...

I lived next to a greenbelt when I lived in Anchorage, which I greatly appreciated. But it was also making me very sad. I would walk in the green belts and the trees had been scarred up and hacked on by little kids making forts. And children should be out there making forts, I'm all for that, but a lot of trash on the ground, and it made me very sad. I felt like the wilderness or the greenbelt areas, were sad. They were, I do not know, they weren't vibrant with life like the way true wilderness is.

Two long-time hunters mentioned the great sense of accomplishment they received through hunting and pursuing difficult game such as a bear or traversing the rocky and steep terrain in search of Dall's sheep. The need for challenge was met through the act of hunting.

The biggest rush I get is when I shoot a bear. That is, it is not like shooting a moose or a caribou or even a wolf it is, you gotta have your wits about ya. And, you gotta know what's going on. And it is a different adrenaline. Adrenaline, it is, you are thinking it is life or death if you get too close to them.

...it is more of a challenge. You know. A moose is much easier to get as far as the environment that they, that they both live in. I mean where your sheep you might, like yeah you can see them but it might take you a day to get to them. Where a moose you might, you might shoot him right along the road just driving to work you know, so, that is you know, it is like, they're in two totally different environments...It is a lot more work for a sheep.

Ever since I shot my first animal I have been, I like eating them is the first thing. But it is still there from the first trigger I pulled...I enjoy seeing the animal fall, I enjoy butchering it, bringing it home, packaging it, eating it, cooking it. I guess you could say it is just a way of life. Subsistence is what it is. For the last 28 years I've been right here, and that is the way I've lived.

The Native philosophy of living close to the land was seen as having similar values to

one participant despite her non-Native background. Native tradition was seen as a valuable lifestyle that she both respected and had adopted as part of her own personal philosophy.

Now I mean I know that I've been to potlucks, potlatches, with the Natives, when they're allowed to kill a moose at any time of the year, and I'm fine with that, you know, I mean that is their custom that they have had for years. In fact they killed a moose for my brother's potlatch, and so it is you know that is part of their culture. Subsistence to me means that you are living off the land really because you need to. And in northern villages for the Eskimos and the Aleuts I think that is very true. That they are in a remote site they cannot drive to the store, there is no store. They have to fly out, and so they have to live off the land. I do not think it is as necessary here. Even though we have a lot of game out here, everybody seems to want to come here to go hunting, and I do not how many are on subsistence that come from other areas, but I know a lot in Cantwell are on subsistence even though they may have a job.

That I've always cared about animals. And I've read a lot about Native culture and I really, I'm in with the Native culture, and so in understanding all of that I just feel that they feel that when an animal gives up its life that they thank the animal for giving its life to them.

Subtheme: Connections to Place Through Time

As a lifestyle, individuals were drawn to Cantwell not only for its natural beauty, but also for the lifestyle of simplicity and connection to the land that it afforded. Individuals shared stories regarding their memories of coming to Cantwell in the decades prior and the many years they had spent living in the area.

I was not born and raised here, so when I came here, a lot of people I think that are born and raised are almost at a disadvantage versus some of the people, some of the people come here for different reasons. I came here and didn't have a clue or I didn't think anything about making money. It was just, never even, was not even on my radar you know. I read about it in a National Geographic or something, and it was talking about you could a homestead for I grew up in Iowa until I was 20. I came up here when I was 22. You know, 62 now.

Like I said we had a swamp buggy, and we could drive right to the cabin door, you know. It was a bit of a ordeal to get there you know, but we could get there,

and we'd take in all of our stuff. To me that is a modern day version. We could stay out there for like I say, from September until June, because you couldn't get out of there you know until June, you'd be snowed in for the road, or the trail, it is not a road. You know, it is pretty iffy. But we just couldn't get out.

It is like if you are out somewhere and let's say you are underneath the inner tire, you know it is all quiet, you can hear the power lines, you know, and I never realized that till I lived here, you know. But there are some nights that, that, that when you get a good blanket of snow, and it is snowing pretty hard, it muffles everything to where you can stand on the porch and you can literally hear the snow you know, hitting the porch, just landing on the porch, and that is kind of, I, that is just something I always thought was really kind of cool. You know, when there is something real peaceful about it.

I learned to fly. And I had my sled dogs. I had a boat and motor. So I was leading the good life. And I had my little log cabin. And then I started having boyfriends, and they all had to fly in to visit me.

When I got off that plane in Minchumina I fell in love with it because it was just like, it was the Alaska I had been looking for. And so I got property there and with a lot of help, built a little log cabin. 16-foot square cabin with a loft. And just soaked up the lifestyle. I got some sled dogs. They were all everybody's culls, so I had a terrible dog team; I was the best leader. These were dogs people didn't want, they even sent them from Fairbanks to me... so oh dear, and I had quite the time mushing, but I enjoyed the heck out of it.

I used to hunt moose up here on the flats and before 75 in the summertime it is a big swamp, so it is hard to, there is not really enough water to run a float plane a lot of it, and it is way too soggy to run a wheel plane. But as soon as it freezes, in like November and December, most of its pretty flat, swampy, hard as a rock. You could land a ski plane out there, pull up next to the moose, shoot it, and be back to town in time for a hamburger at lunchtime. But on those days the daylight would be really short, the temperatures could be as much as 50 below 0, and nobody wants to camp. And if you go out and find a moose today and camp by them, hey he isn't going to be there tomorrow. You know, so, but you probably are because your airplane isn't going to start at 50 below 0. You know, whereas if you, through the engine tend over it, whack the moose up, threw him in you know, and it'll still crank up couple hours later, so. But and you get back to where things were warm, and you are not out there trying to be in a tent when it is really cold. So that was a big change for my life.

Individuals mentioned how they were so strongly connected to Cantwell that the thought of leaving and living elsewhere was difficult for them to comprehend.

After living in the bush for 7 years and being in a small community, when I first

came to Cantwell there were only 88 people. And I figure right now we have somewhere round 250 or 260 people in town. I could never live in town again. I avoid Anchorage like the plague. Anchorage is a zoo. I mean over half of our population of the state is in Anchorage. Last weekend I took my sister down and put her on an airplane. And dear Lord keep me safe. I have no desire to live in town. None. Whatsoever. If I had to move somewhere it'd be back to the bush. There are days where Cantwell is too big. So no, I have no desire to live anywhere else.

I mean you know my mom and my uncle still live here but I mean I've lived here for so long that it is kind of, once you've spent any time here... you'll keep coming back. Even if you do not live here, you'll keep visiting.

I think when it is all said and done I'll probably retire here. You know, I do not know when that, you know, when that will be. Hell, that could be in 30 minutes you know, but, no I think I'll always have a house here, you know or a piece of property or something, you know. But more than likely I'll probably live here until I die. I spent a couple years outside, and it was basically just to see if I was missing anything, you know, it was like well, you know, this, I mean you are pretty secluded, you know so I went outside just to see well what is it that I'm missing, and I wanted to go to the big cities and I lived in Salt Lake City, I lived in Wyoming, and Oregon and Idaho. I've seen all that. And it is like, yeah, didn't lose anything there.

I could go into Anchorage, and I'm sure and find something that would I do not know I cannot imagine what it would be, but I think I could, you know. I do not want to try it, I do not want to try it at all you know and then, I do not ever foresee it ever being something that I'd have to go through doing because I'm, I cannot imagine what I would do. But I got total confidence that as long as I prayed about it and stuff and stayed on and like I say I haven't got a clue about what'd would be, you know. So I do not want to ever want to get tested that way for sure, but I think I could do it you know.

I think my kids and I having lived in the bush and here in Cantwell have seen and experienced more of real life than those people living in the cities. I wouldn't trade you city life because to me that is not the real life. That is not really living.

Though much of the historical connections to the Cantwell community were made within the past century, several individuals mentioned the lifestyle of frontier life that they had gravitated towards when moving to Alaska from the Lower 48. The long-standing connection to place was often several decades long and often spanned most, if not all, of an individual's lifespan. For instance, another woman mentioned how Cantwell was

similar to her home in Michigan where she had grown up. Living close to the land, using resources, and seeing wildlife every day was similar to the simple farm life she had known from childhood.

I came from Michigan. Grew up in Michigan on a farm near Lake Heron. All-purpose farm with crops and animals. We had corn, oats, wheat, gardens, raspberries, strawberries, all kinds of fruit trees.

I was born in Michigan and lived in Wisconsin until I was 12. My dad had been coming up several years before we came to Alaska in 57. He first came in 51 working construction up here, fell in love with Alaska, moved my mother and me, I was the last kid at home, and we lived at Tok, and this was prestatehood. Alaska became a state in 59 and we came up in 57...

I always say it is not that different than Michigan. Other than I've got beautiful mountains, and I didn't have beautiful mountains there. But you've got your forests, and you've got open spaces you see my house here? I've got open space, and there used to be nothing there but nature. I mean for 15 years while I lived here I didn't look at anything but nature, and now it is sort of full of people. And the farm you had the whole space around you. We were on a farm with 80 acres of land there and 80 acres down the road and 60 acres farther away. So you had lots of space, and you weren't crowded together. And you have the nature all around you.

[My brother] did all those things right there in Michigan that when he was a school boy in 8th grade he was going out setting his traps and things, so I never went out and set traps, but I knew that people who did it liked doing it. And then he moved to the Upper Peninsula in Michigan, so he could have more land, and he went to the area where he went deer hunting from the time he was old enough to hunt. And so it is sort of like I came back to a place that was sort of like my brother's dream place you know. Where there are animals and there is hunting, and my husband had subsisted by trapping and hunting and gold mining and then jade mining.

One Cantwell resident expressed her deep attachment to Cantwell beginning with her historical attachment as a child growing up on a homestead. Her desire to be close to nature and the ability to live a simpler life were values that she felt deeply tied to.

I came in 1954 with my parents. My grandfather had just completed the roads to Denali Park, which was McKinley Park, to Packson, and to Summit, the FAA station. In my day we were the only ones out on the Denali, and my brother hunted for everything. As did my dad. We ate only wild meat. That is what I was

raised on. That is what I've always eaten.

I come back every year and I love my spot. I mean I'm still a part of the homestead that we homesteaded, and my mom lives in Anchorage now, and my dad is deceased, and my brother is deceased. I'm the only one left, but I love this place. I mean the scenery, the mountains and everything,
When I'm coming around Panorama and I realize I'm so close to the cabin I get so excited. I'm like a homing pigeon that knows you know where my heart is.

Unfortunately I cannot be buried here. There is no White cemetery. And that is sad. And so my brother married a Native girl, and he died in 99, and so he asked permission if he could be buried in their cemetery, and so they put him off to the side, but he's in that cemetery next to the Parks High Way. And so he's there. I would love to be buried here because I mean I love this place, but knowing that I couldn't be, I bought a plot in Palmer. I mean I was born there, but I have no real connection.

I guess Cantwell has shaped me, and I guess that is why I enjoy coming back so much. I love the simplicity.

We lived in an earth house, and then we had a tunnel that we went through. It came up in the garage, and that was the way out in the winter because the snow would berm in front of the door, and it was just so dismal you had to have the propane lights on all the time. And there was just that hissing, hhhhhhrrrrh, and I read by that light and I oh, and so coming home at that time was not fun. But after I grew up and had a choice then I found, you know, I love this place, I absolutely love this place.

Several participants expressed frustration over the lack of respect for the local wildlife. Participants felt strongly that the wildlife were a resource to be utilized, but that should be respected and protected as well. Individuals with an outsider's mentality of disrespect was found to be deeply disturbing to locals. The changes brought on by the Parks Highway were lamented as having a deeply negative effect on the culture of Cantwell. In one situation, a participant mentioned how her father gave up hunting after seeing the wasteful hunting culture of outsiders.

Now since the 80s and the Parks highway in the 70s and the electricity in the 80s, all this influx of people that have come in a lot of people call them end of roaders. They're going nowhere. They're just here because they have no place else to go. And their thinking skewed and, and they do not respect the land.

The people coming in, and they were only interested in trophies, they were only interested in the racks, they weren't interested in the meat, things like that you know. [My dad] didn't like it. And he just finally thought you know what, I do not need to do this anymore....at that point [he] gave up hunting.

Anchorage and Fairbanks people going in. And there is no way to, you know, it is open country. You cannot keep them out. And the only thing we can do is during hunting season is go back there and spend a couple weeks back there and take only what we want and try to protect some of the numbers by, just by being there.

By the time my dad married her I do not think he was hunting anymore. He kind of got to a point where from taking hunters out he saw things he didn't like you know. They would say oh shoot it for me and he says I'm not going to do that. You are out here to shoot, you shoot it, I'm not shooting it for you. And he just saw things he didn't like about the people that were coming to hunt, and so he said no, I do not want to do this anymore.

Main Theme: Technology

The introduction of electricity, television, and other technologies were mentioned as having had great impact on the community of Cantwell, particularly among the youth and their connection to the outdoors.

Subtheme: Negative for Community/Youth

Prior to television, participants remembered a more sociable atmosphere and a greater involvement with outdoor activities.

Not what kids do now that is for sure. We didn't have video games, we didn't have TV. Radio reception was somewhat sketchy you know. So just outdoor stuff you know. Playing outdoors and hunting, you know, bird hunting and stuff like that and moose hunting. A lot of outdoor activities.

We never had phones, and so I didn't see a use for it. So when phones came through and mom said "you need a phone," no I do not. I hate phones. My grandpa always said state your business and get off the phone. So I didn't want to chat on the phone. No I do not want a phone. No, you need to get a jack, at least get a jack on the road you know, out by the road. So I did. Now I have a phone. Right now it is dead. The battery is dead. So I had to call Radio Shack in

Fairbanks and say would you send me a battery my phone is dead. But you know it is been really peaceful. It is completely peaceful.

You could get TV in Cantwell finally. You had only the one channel; it was called RATNET, and it is Rural Alaska Television Network. Yeah, RATNET. And well when that came in then people didn't do as much visiting, like stopping in to have a cup of tea or something. People would go in the evenings and instead of going to somebody's house maybe just have a chitchat over a cup of coffee or something, people stayed home and watched RATNET. And so I began to see the community change where people began to isolate themselves from one another. And then the big clincher was when they put the Parks Highway in. Once that Parks Highway went through which was in 71, 72, someplace in there, and people could leave Cantwell anytime they felt like it, they really stopped socializing with each other. I really saw, and while we had a sense of community here, everybody more or less does their own thing. It is greatly respected that you are allowed to do your own thing, but there is not the drop in company, no the oh lets go berry picking together or whatever. And certainly not the Friday night movies at the school. RATNET was the beginning. Television was the beginning. And then where people didn't do so much together anymore, and then when the Parks Highway came in they really lost that sense of community.

You know, [Cantwell] is very family oriented. I curse the day that computers were introduced to this community....folks would get together and it would just be like, what's the word I'm looking for, spontaneous...somebody have a hay wagon or something like that and they would all get together...They would do it as a community. But now it is like, man, you do not even see kids playing in the streets anymore...But yeah it doesn't happen that much anymore, which I think...is really sad...

It looks like they got...lazier people. I do not know. It is like today with the kids, it is more inside, it is more Xbox games, it is more, like, satellite TV, I mean I feel guilty for having a DVD player. Because I can sit here and watch all my reruns over and over and over again. And community will run along fine without. They'll wonder where I'm at.

Subtheme: Reduces Connectedness to Nature/Family/Friends

In addition to losing a sense of community among the people of Cantwell, technology, particularly television and video games, was seen as disconnecting people from living a subsistence lifestyle.

As far as a 100% of subsistence? I do not think there is anything, I mean you

know it might be limited but as far as, yeah, I mean the days of, you know, living entirely off the land you know, I think those are gone, so. Everybody, everybody's tied into like you say, the national if not international scene anymore. You know, electronics.

Course there is not, there is, there is not a lot for young people to do, but like I say, then your back to the computer thing, and it is like, well, you know, get out and go find something to do. And then, and they come sit and go I'm bored. Well go get your ass on your snowmachine.

Or just go out and spend you know, spend some time you know, you get to thinking a lot about get rid of your computer and the other stuff, take some books and watch the northern lights and thrash around, and it is just good.

I get one of my pseudo-nephews that I take bird hunting, you know. Because they're kind of like family, and it is fun to take kids out and teach them stuff. And it makes me feel good too. And they usually have a blast... Well it is helping with the traditional rural lifestyle to teach them you know the same things that I learned. You know. And they go out with other, other folks too... Gets them away from their damn video games. Satellite TVs...

Main Theme: Solitude

Solitude, a need for quietness, was greatly valued among some of the participants.

The culture of Cantwell focused on quietness, the need to feel remote and distant from people.

Subtheme: Solitude as a Lifestyle

One participant recognized the introverted nature of many individuals living in the area and that the type of people who lived in Cantwell were attracted to the solitude of the place. A yearning for a simpler time when the community was smaller and less busy was also expressed.

There are a lot of people up here that live alone. They live in these little cabins, and they're all by themselves. A lot of females and males that live alone. I mean I was counting one day, and I thought my gosh, for such a small community I

cannot believe how many people live alone.

I mean it is just, there is just so much there, and I do not want it ruined. But now on the other side of the road I can hear the chainsaw going and the dogs barking and everything and I'm thinking oh where did my piece of solitude go? That is what people bring. I liked it better when it was just, when we were out there all by ourselves on the homestead. It was so peaceful.

I really do not like lots of people around. I can sit here, sow on my sowing machine, do my projects and sometimes not see anybody all day. Or else you get less done because you are not pushed for, for schedule at all.

So I live a lifestyle that is a lot of solitude, and I do not have much contact with the more populated world around me. I do not pay attention to the news and stuff like that. So I lead a pretty calm, peaceful life, but I'm choosing to do that. It is my choice in order for me to do my art.

I've never been a group thing. Go with just us you know...I mean no I prefer to hunt alone.

I've always been kind of a loner. I...kind of hang to myself. I mean I enjoy the same stuff that a lot of other people do, but I, yeah, I, I enjoy my own company fairly well I guess so, but, I'm not kidding. I do not need a crowd to be happy, I guess is what I'm saying,

Living alone...I cannot say it really bothered me. I always had a dog with me. You know, but it never really totally bother me either you know. I read a lot, and there is something to being alone too, you know, there is, you get a completely, mental flush, you know, or whatever you want to call it, you know, you start looking at things a little different and, there again, you go through a period to where you might get a little something might, I do not know. I never felt like I was freaking out because I was alone. It never did bother me really.

I'm tired of listening to people. I'd like to listen to, you know, birds, frogs, especially spring time. I like quiet.

One participant mentioned how for one group of visitors, Cantwell was a place to vacation due to the tranquility that it offered.

Well, we were here a couple years ago, and we had a couple that they came up to taking pictures for their anniversary, you know, because he had asked her well where do you want to go for your anniversary, we've got a babysitter for the kids and everything, you know, where do you want to go? And she said Cantwell. I'm just like, real, really? But, and they just camped out, you know, back here by the, on the creek, and then they came up the next, the following weekend and picked

blueberries, you know, with the grandmother and all the kids and the whole thing you know in her words, she wanted some place quiet. And, it was like, let's go to Cantwell, and that is what they did. And then they came back the following week, you know, with their, with their motorhome, their kids, you know, the whole thing. But, it is a different, more laid back lifestyle. In a lot of aspects you know it is very forgiving here, you know, as far as like the hustle and bustle.

Subtheme: Connectedness with Nature

Being away from even the seemingly quiet town of Cantwell was refreshing. Jay Creek, an area homesteaded by one participant, was seen as a place to get away, relax, and have the mind focused on important elements in his life.

I got to go out to at their cabin at Jay Creek [with my neighbor and his son], and I went out there for 3 days. We were out there for like 3 nights, so it was like a 4-day deal. So that was fun. Beautiful place. Beautiful. Yeah, you gotta get away from it all. Yeah get away from the rat race you know. We were down there at the stop sign, and we had to wait for like three cars, and [my wife] goes, where are all these people coming from? And I say, sweetie, it is only three cars. Had to wait for three cars, about losing it, Cantwell life.

Well maybe it is just personalities or something you just, like this. You are trying to do too many things at once and stuff and getting frustrated and then you gotta try okay, slow down you know. And it'd take ya, it'd take me like a month, and I would move into a setting that is in a pace that is conducive to sanity or something you know... Even though you weren't running around, you slowed way down, but your head got cleared up. Too many things on your mind when your first get there and you're thinking about this and that, and pretty soon you do not know what day it is. You forget where your billfold's at because it do not matter anymore.

I always give myself about an hour and a half to get a cup of coffee and just, what I call muse, I sit, sit with my coffee, and I make luminous notes about everything. I have a notebook where I just note things, and you know I love to sit and think and I love to write. And so that first hour and half of my day starts out with me just sipping coffee and doing those things. I do not want to ask anything else of myself so, boy am I pretty spoiled or what? I do not have any need to shower in 10 minutes and be on the road in half an hour.

Subtheme: Get Away from People/Noise/City

Participants mentioned the need for quietness as an activity that gives freedom to be away from the normal, and in some cases, the perceived hectic schedule of work and town life.

Peace and quiet. And you can, you know, especially when I'm alone I can do what I want. What I have to do, you know, just get stock up on wood and all that and lay around or go for something like a short nature walk from camp, peace and quiet.

It is just really good. Relaxing. it is yeah, it is just peaceful up there too, you know, without any intrusion from other people or electronics. Or the boss, wanting you to come to work on your day off.

If I do not get it, fine I was there, I had the camp smoke in my eye you know, had to carry water, cut wood, you know, the experience is half of why I go anyways. To be out there, you cannot reach me on that. I cannot go click the TV on, you gotta do something out of your ordinary routine.

Childhood Connections to Nature

Participants frequently mentioned the connections they had to subsistence, nature, and the outdoors throughout their childhood. Participants described learning to hunt from elders, friends, and family, and the general growing up lifestyle of living close to the land.

Subtheme: Connections to Place Through Time

Individuals often compared the way life was when they were children to what life was like now, often describing a time of more abundant wildlife and less intrusion from the outside. For most, the lifestyle of connection to nature and place was a value that stayed with them on into adulthood.

I like to get my caribou in the right at the start of the season because that is when the meat's the best. Yeah. They do not, they're not really ratty, and they have been eating really well you know. And when I as a kid there on the Denali Highway there used to be thousands of them in herds you know. Thousands. Not anymore.

The county I grew up in had about 25,000 people. It is not quite a million though. Same place, but it is not the same place, you know. But they roofed her and paved her. So, the lifestyle that, when I was a kid, is changed, but the number of people is drastically increased. But and I like being here is the best way to describe that. You know at the time, and what highway there was all gravel roads. And in the wintertime the only way you could get in and out here was by train or to fly. Yeah. So I, it was a great way to grow up. I wish kids today would have, well they have got the opportunity, but they do not have the drive to get out and do some of the stuff that you know we did when I was a kid.

Subtheme: Being Taught by Family/Friends

Individuals mentioned learning from others regarding subsistence and enjoying the land whether it was through hunting activities or exploration; the lifestyle of being outdoors was very strong within their lives.

I just picked it up growing up, you know. I mean I grew up right around here, so you know going out with different people and some of the Native elders, you know. We used to go out hunting and fishing and berry picking. Camp out.

We were already very bonded. I mean we were the siblings closest in age. And as brother and sister I was happy to go and do all the exciting things he wanted to do outside. And he was willing to take me even though I was 4 years younger.

My dad asked me just last summer, is that all you are going to do is hunt and fish? And I answered him with, you put the gun in my hand at 10 years old and told me to shoot my own moose. So, yeah, this is all I'm going to do.

And I watched, when I was younger I watched all kind of guys butcher. How they did it. Some used axes, some used saws. They all used a knife, one or two knives, but like if you cut a moose leg off with a knife in the right spot it pops off.

I been hunting since I was, with a rifle since I was 10, so that is 49 years, but before that we used sling shots and BB guns. So I've been, my dad was a hunter all, all of his life. He was one who went to different states to hunt different species and stuff. Never left the United States, but he did go Wyoming, Montana, Idaho,

and we were living in Oklahoma, but he was traveling. And so I've been involved ever since I was, since I can remember. And he's always had some meat hanging or, you know, hunting something and fishing.

She taught me how to cut the meat into which sections were what you know, like these are steaks are these are roasts, this is ground into hamburger and make sausage. She was out there all the time too. She was outdoors. She was a full blood Seminole Indian, and she just did the cooking...keep the camp organized, and [if] you had wet pants, she'd hang them on a line, and you get caretaker at the camp, cook.

I got a cutting permit to cut wood. I had a wood lot, and then I got subsistence fish nets for myself and the dogs, and no I never hunted, I never had the heart to...my dad was a gunsmith, taught me to shoot, I shot my first gun. It was leaning on a bench aimed at a target, but I got to pull the trigger when I was 6 years old. So I know how to shoot and handle a gun, but I've never gone hunting. I was always happy to get someone else's moose meat.

But it is still neat what well like his boy, 13. Man I can remember when, you know, that was when nobody wanted to take me. I was not old enough to have a vehicle, you know, and I had all my older brothers were going, well go away kid, you know, but Benedict could take me, you know so. I didn't mind being his gopher. In fact I loved it. You know, and I really liked him too. He was, you know, he was really good to me. But, and he loved to shoot and that kind of wore off on me too.

My dad always had tried to get a moose, and if he couldn't get a moose then, you know, try to get a caribou. So we lived on wild game. Fish certainly was part of our diet. And my mom smoked salmon and things like that. And then of course we did the berry picking. So very typical subsistence, you know. We hunted the wild game and ate what fish were available in the area that we were in. And picked what berries were available. So yeah, full subsistence... now my subsistence consists of going out and fireweed shoots in the spring for salad and then the berries of course I mean, you know, gotta have those berries. Gotta have them! And so that is yeah the extent of my subsistence nowadays. It is not much anymore. But it played a big part in my life growing up here.

Subtheme: Being Taught by Family/Friends

Two participants recognized the lack of education regarding the outdoors that they saw in the younger generation. The need for hunting as a traditional activity as well as the protection of wild places was seen as deeply valuable.

I think we're programmed to appreciate beauty. And I think the people that do not did not have the luck or whatever to be exposed to it as children. I think it is very important that all children everywhere get some access to getting out in nature. Whether it is these inner city programs or whatever, boy do I think that is important. I think the average child already has something in them that they have a need of being exposed to that. And I hope we will always have that for those kids growing up. And they will sustain, keeping some areas wild.

Most of my clients when I first came up here were older people. One of the things I was happy to see this year Brian just bough, brought, his 13 year old, one of my sheep hunters, brought his boy. But, and I got a moose hunter that is bringing his grandson. And for the last few years, when I first started in this business, back in the 60s, if I'd get two guys come up, one of them would bring their kid. And that is neat because it also means hey if the kids are interested, it is going to keep on happening, and for the last few years I have seen very few young kids, which is kind of sad.

If the young people are not interested in doing it, you know, hey by the time my grandson who is 6 now gets to be my age and somebody says, what's a hunter, is he going to say, what's that? You know, but where it is been a lifestyle for a lot of the people up here.

It is nice to have some of your buddies they want a moose, and I'd rather see them shoot their own moose than me shoot it for them, you know so. And the other deal is like I say is there is becoming less hunters in the United States, and it is been it is at its lowest now than it ever has been ever. And it is from people not learning anything.

When asked what he would do in place of hunting if he were ever not able to hunt anymore, one participant mentioned that not hunting was never an option.

I wouldn't like it at all. It is just, big part of my life, and it always has been. Well I'd do everything I could to prevent that from happening. Whether it be political or whatever you know, financially or politically, you know, join hunting clubs and whatnot you know.

Several participants also mentioned how their lives living in Cantwell were not much different than living where they had grown up. In some cases individuals felt that while a lot of changes had happened in the rural places of their childhood that made them no longer the quiet, small town homes of their youth, Cantwell was similar enough that it was the home they had been looking for.

I could see the ships go up and down the Columbia River from our old farm. But there was, oh we had pheasants cottontails blacktail deer, all on the place. The Columbia River is a tremendous flyaway. I grew up right in the marshes and the lowland there along the Columbia River where, and that was good fishing. You know it, it got huge runs of salmon, smelt, then I caught sturgeon. There was quite a bit of outdoor stuff to do down there when you had time to do it.

[My wife] and I were both born in Portland and I grew up about 20 miles north of Portland. But only on the Washington side of the river at a little place called Ridgefield Washington. And it was commercial fishing, farming, and logging. You did one of those three things.

The area that I grew up in there was, well, there were 50 to 60 commercial fishing boats in that little town, and that always fascinated me when I had, anytime I had an hour I'd go down and sit on the dock and try to catch a cat fish or a bass, or I'd watch these guys come in with the salmon and when the salmon were running. And the Columbia River, in the 50s probably rivaled any river in Alaska at the time. It got tremendous runs of salmon in it. So, that was neat. But I just wanted off the farm and I ran away to Alaska. That is what I did.

[My wife] was raised here...She was born outdoors, you know so. [I] didn't have to bring her here and say we're going to do this.

My mother grew up on a farm in Iowa, and my dad was in a town 13 miles away, but he lived in the city, which was 5000 people there. But he was very poor. They were both probably economically, they were probably similar. But she grew up more on a farm where they did their own chickens and eggs and milk, more subsistence.

It is tradition, yeah. Yup. I come from a hunting family. Hunting and fishing family, and well if you go back far enough, I mean if you didn't hunt you didn't eat, that is just the way it was. You know. Everybody, everybody that came to, even America and Europe too I mean that was just hunting is it, you know, it is not something new. It is just you know, it was just a way of putting food on the table. So, and fishing the same thing, you know.

Oh well I was always a country person. Always lived out and the last place we lived before we left for Alaska was 5 miles out of a little town called Hurley, Wisconsin. Well we lived out in the country. My mother always had chickens and so I took care of, you know, I helped her take care of the chickens. We always had dogs, and then when I got old enough I had a horse.

Main Theme: No-Waste Lifestyle

The value of utilizing fewer resources and making do with what was around you was highly valued among participants. Individuals mentioned the words “simplicity” and highly valued frugality. Living within ones means was considered a skill, and in many ways doing without was seen as a better way of life.

Subtheme: Simple Lifestyle Is Positive

As a lifestyle, living simply and frugally was a strong part of being a Cantwell resident. One individual recognized that having more did not make an individual happy, and that for her, the fewer commodities she had the better.

A man from Florida came up, and I was signing books and he said, I saw something that I have never seen before. He said I was on the internet, and I was looking for property in Talkeetna, and there was a house for sale, and it had no bedrooms. And I thought for a minute and I said, mine has no bedroom. And it was kind of like well isn't that kind of normal for up here?

It is just like when electricity came in in the 80s my mom said, you need electricity. No I do not. I have propane lights. You need electricity. Get that pole. If you do not get it now, it is going to cost you a 1,000 dollars later. All right I'll get it. Well I'm glad I have electricity now, [but] it doesn't simply things.

I do not think I would have had that had I been raised anyplace else. I think of the simple life that I had here. It just made me realize you do not have to have a lot to make you happy.

I'm not after that golden ring. I'm not always searching for something. And it is given me a peace that I just do not need an awful lot to make me happy. I'm happiest when I'm at the cabin, in that one room cabin, and doing the dishes in three stainless steel pans, heating up the water. It is a dry cabin, and you know, I mean, it is just such a simple life.

It is a simple life. When I'm in Wyoming I do not want to keep up with the Joneses. I mean, my husband is always saying, oh we do not have a boat, we do not have snow machines, we do not have four-wheelers, we do not have a trailer, we do not have all of this. That has never interested me. I've never been a person that really cared about possessions.

He chopped wood and sold wood for a living, firewood, and then finally he went into Fairbanks. He had a job with Raven Industries, and yeah, so he worked there until he died. A heart attack. But he loved Cantwell too. He really did. He didn't want to leave. He didn't want to go in to Fairbanks, and his wife wanted more. She wanted, she wanted the new pickup, and she wanted the house, and she wanted more, so even though they had a cabin here, and it was a nice cabin, it just was not enough. She wanted more.

Hunting for sport was a mentality not understood by Cantwell residents. Individuals felt that one should only hunt for food and that to harvest game for anything other than food was a wasteful activity.

If they kill something now, they might just take a portion of it, or they might just, you know, like one guy that killed a bear here just put it in the back of the pickup and paraded it around to show it to everybody that he had killed a bear, and I just thought what a waste. That animal's life went for absolutely nothing. The hide, you know, maybe he used the hide to hang on his wall or something. But he didn't use the meat, and I just do not think that you should kill something unless you are going to use the meat to make it worth that animal's life for taking that life.

The thing I saw back then that really upset me even as a child was that people would come from Anchorage, the military bases, when they didn't have any way to prepare the meat, and they would just come to shoot the animals out on the Denali because the moose hunting, the caribou hunting, it was all fantastic. And sheep. They would cut the heads off and just take the heads and leave the carcasses. Yes. That was very upsetting. Because it was such a waste, especially when local people could use it.

I have seen a lot of people coming up here that have no respect for the land. They have no respect for the animals. If it moves, they're going to shoot it. They do not care. They do not need the meat. They just shoot it because it is here. There is abundance. And I hate to see that. And so I've seen a lot of that. I've seen them kill the bears just because they would happen to be here or kill a trumpeter swan just because they can or whatever, you know, I mean it is just not the way that I grew up. It is not the way that we in this community grew up.

A lot of people that do not know what they're talking about they're just going to go out and hammer the hell out of everything, and then the next year they're not going to get nothing. So when you come into a town like this, when you got several people that just recreational go out and set traps and stuff, there is no way that you can farm your resources.

I do not want to sound racist or ugly, but it is the city mentality is what it is. They made a race out of it. And it is not a race to get, you know, they're boom, boom,

boom. Get your moose then get out. And saying those people do not gotta prove or never been asked how many blueberries you pick, cranberries, how much fish you get, if you cut firewood versus, oh I just buy gas and go to work. So they just come, rape the country, and go.

Trappers. I understand they're four in Cantwell. They had jobs. They do not need it. But they do it. Because they can, and, and that is just, that is the side that I do not like. It is just the changes that I've seen over the years. The local Natives used to do a little trapping. They didn't overtrap; they just trapped because they, they made their mukluks and their mittens and things like that. They used them for themselves. So I guess...to me it is kind of greedy.

Subtheme: Conserving Resources

Fish and game were considered to be a valuable resource that if not valued and conserved, would not be there for the future.

I mean if you do not care for it, it is not going to take care of you. And it is the same with the animals. If you kill just to kill, just because there is an abundance, it is not going to be here for you in the future.

I mean, I just always believed that if something died at your hands, you should make use of it. Not just one part of it, but all of it. And, and that is the way the true Natives and the Eskimos and the Aleut did is that when they killed an animal they used every part of it.

They used everything. Because they had to. Because they didn't have any other any other resource. I mean, they had, right there what they needed to live on. It was the simple life. And, and I just feel that things have gotten more complicated and people are more into a throwaway society now, and so they do not use everything.

One other person is probably the most I've ever hunted with, you know, and that was go on the same mission, you know. It was just getting groceries. I'm not knocking trophy stuff at all, you know. I never had a problem with that either as long as nothing gets wasted. I do not have a problem in the world with it.

A lot of teachers would come up here that were new to the area that were from some place that didn't have the animals and they would trap. And they didn't know anything about trapping, but they just wanted to do it because that was the mountain man way. So they would set the traps, they wouldn't go back to check them, and the animal would be wasted or chew its foot off.

One teacher was trapping beaver and didn't check his traps, and they bloated underwater, and I mean it was just such a waste that it just made me very sad because I believe that you know you take what you need, and you do not take extra. And, and there are people that will say oh yeah but we trap because you know that is our way of life. And yet I think, that is not your way of life; you do not need this. You have other jobs; you bring in an income. That is, you just want to be mountain men.

I witnessed way back when I was still up on the Kobuk, I witnessed where young hunters were, were just having bad morals that, I mean they were not being conscientious about taking the game home that they got. If the next day they could get some closer to home, they would just let the others out there to rot. I witnessed some major slaughter areas, you know, where somebody had just had a big shoot up of caribou. For no...purpose.

It is like this hunt, the community harvest this year, the one group of people that went into 13-B, 41 moose. I heard another story it was in one day, those 41 moose were shot. That is not subsistence. That is greed.

Tell me, look at this group in the city, now look at the group where the people that actually live here. What happened to your side? It is greed is what it is. Because the Natives came up with a hunt for themselves, but now everybody, you know, we're subsistence too. Well, you live right next to Burger King.

I just live off what's needed versus, like those guys, I could have a rolodex in my shirt pocket of tags through this hunt. But I just shoot two moose. And see if I had nine tags in here, I could go. If I could find them, I could legally go shoot nine moose. I would be no better than those people. Because they're just shooting, shooting because they can, not because of need. And that is what I see out of those people.

Harvesting game for food was valued above hunting for sport. Utilizing all the parts of the animal was considered to be the more responsible method for a hunter.

I believe in taking what you need and nothing more. I mean you take it because you need it. You do not take it just for the thrill of killing.

We used to set a set net in the lake for white fish. And so we'd get about 11 whitefish a day. And it was my job to clean them. And so we lived on a lot of fish as well as caribou and moose. And we ate squirrels. We ate dump squirrels. And they used to have the dump where the gravel pit is now on the Denali, and so we would go there, and dad would shoot squirrels, and my brother would shoot squirrels and ptarmigan, and so we always had meat, and we hung it in the cash to cure, and I never remember going hungry. I mean we always had food. But there was not waste. We never wasted anything.

So a lot of our scraps as we're butchering meat we'll take up to Mike Santos and let him utilize the scrap meat. So yeah, you know the animals just do not go to waste. They get used from tongue tip to haunch.

Every once in a while you can get a halfway decent animal off the road, and so we've, we've utilized that. And, so hopefully, too many do not get killed on the road this winter. We need them during hunting season. We want them fair and square. Right. Right, you know, and so. What you do with the rest is you try to find a dog musher.

We have to bring out the horns, and then we fly out. We bring all the neck meat because we make sausage out of the neck meat, tenderloins, and backstraps, that is the first dinners. Both rib cages, both front quarters, and both hindquarters. We have to bring everything out, everything edible. So, yeah, and the entire animal, and the same goes with the caribou; the entire animal comes out.

I do not want to kill anything. But I'm willing to wear the fur coat. And I'm willing to wear the mukluks and the things that kept me nice and warm, but I didn't really want to kill it. And even on the farm, I mean, we ate our own meat and stuff, well, I didn't do the butchering. And I raised steers, and we sold the steers, well, it was a way to carry out a 4H project and have an income. And you put your money in the bank, you know, so. So you were using it for a purpose.

I do like the fact that they have a signup list now that if a moose is hit, the trooper can call somebody on the list, and if they're not available they go on to the next person. I like that because in my day no one was called. The meat went to waste.

One woman mentioned the waste she saw from railroad kills and how it saddened her to see the large numbers of killed moose and caribou.

Every time I came home the train, I would sit and count by the hour up to a hundred dead moose on the railroad track. And at times they would say, oh yeah, we'll take it to the orphanage that was in Palmer, but they weren't picking them all up. And there were just dead carcasses all over because they wanted to get out of the deep snow. And so there was a lot of waste.

I mean Colorado goes to Wyoming now to get fish because they have fished themselves out and hunted themselves out, and at what point is it going to happen up here? So many people come up here because of the moose and the caribou for hunting season. So many people go to Delta Junction because of the moose. They all go to the same areas. And so many are hit by the trains, so many are hit on the road. At what point are we going to be out of these things? And that makes me sad.

Individuals mentioned the daily activities that were a central part of their lives regarding

utilizing the resources that were around them.

I'll fish, I'm looking for a bear, but I got my pole, I'm going to fish while I'm there too. Because the price of gas you gotta think about all that stuff. Take a chain saw too. You find a nice tree, you cut the tree, and bring that in. When it was 70 cents a gallon, you didn't think about things like that. Just roll on. But at 5 dollars a gallon you gotta figure out where you going and bring something back, or try to. And that is what I do. I gotta chainsaw. If I do not find a moose, I remember that tree. It was back over this away, drive over there, just load that up. And pretty soon you [have] firewood for the winter.

We're gathering these caribou antlers drops, and some of them are large enough, and you know, we use them for decorative things, but the smaller ones we cut them up into individual sizes for the dogs, and that is what they chew on. That is what they keep their, they keep occupied and they, it is like their chew bones, very healthy for them. They get the minerals out of them and they, their teeth are much cleaner when they get to chew on these things, so that is kind of been our mission.

Where we were at was that whole Nelchina herd. A big portion would roll right through the valley, so it was a big thing out there because we used everything. Not everything, but the horns. He would try to get a nice, because they're a bigger animal anyway their fat, the bigger bulls you know, but then you could take the racks and do a good job of cutting them off so that they could be mounted, and you could bring them to town and get a couple hundred bucks out of a rack, you know. And you could do the hide, and we'd make hats out of the belly, make mukluks out of the legs, and then you'd have the square part of the hide for, make a great ground down cloth or make vests out of them and stuff. And it is good eating too you know. So it was really, that is a valuable animal you know.

They start. They're getting in the rut. They're getting funky. The meat do not taste good you know, so you shoot a cow. You wait a little longer, and you get a cow. Cows good eating, but it is illegal as hell. You cannot do that; that is subsisting. Because you are utilizing whatever you can, and you want to get the best you can because you do not want to waste it and shoot something and the meat's no good. It is legal, but the meat's no good, so what are you going to do with it? That is legal, but it do not no good. It's, you know, it's wasting. Want and waste in my book.

Not wasting resources was considered by one individual to be a cultural value. Older Cantwell residents were thought of as being conservation-minded, while much of the newer generation was viewed as being wasteful.

You do not waste things and you do not kill them unless you really need them,

and that was very much the old culture up here.

I remember when I went stateside first time and people had on things that I had never seen before, we were so far behind. But you know there is an innocence about that too. You are not trying to keep up with the Joneses.

Thinking about the future needs of society and the need for continued renewable resources was mentioned.

It just seems right to respect all the diversity of the planet itself. Just the natural world everywhere all over the planet, it is just pretty amazing, and while I do not want to stop progress, I want growth that is responsible and something that isn't going to destroy part of the earth that we can never ever get back.

Do not ruin it for yourself or for others or for future generations and do not trash it up do not take everything. You know, leave some for the next generation. And that is, that is just who I am. But I also think that that was pretty much the principles of my whole family.

I'm certainly a big believer in managing our resources well. We have to think of the future. So I do not appreciate when I think care is not being taken toward that end. That wonderful seventh generation thing. If they have the next 7 generations, well I do, you know. I think oh my goodness, 7 generations from now, what kind of earth are they going to have? And so I hope that we all you know try to keep this whole sustainable thing going here. Keep sustaining it, and it sustains us. And I think it is very important that, you know, Alaska's one of the last big wilderness places on the earth. And that we take on that responsibility. And ensure that it will still be around 7 generations from now.

Being a responsible hunter meant not being wasteful. Every part of the animal had a purpose and a use. Ethical hunting also included not letting the animal suffer as well as not overhunting or overusing a resource.

I guess you can call me an ethical trapper because I care about the animal. If it is sitting in a trap, I wouldn't want to be sitting in a trap any longer than you'd have to be. And there is guys that run a 150 mile traplines, which means there is something that is going to freeze to death. Or starve to death, you know, if the weather lets it not breath. You gotta think about that it is gotta be quick; that is, like if you get it over with because you do not want him suffering.

I do not know of anybody of our friends or people that we know that are looking for the big rack. I mean, they're looking for meat. But we are very small percentage of the people that are out there hunting. And really it doesn't matter

what our motivation is, the issue is there is not enough animal to sustain it. I do not care whether you are killing it for meat or killing it because you want the rack. It is still a dead animal. And how can you keep killing animals at a rate higher than they can reproduce?

Like to think that these guys will think that, it all goes back to spiritual stuff to me, you know, it was put there for us to utilize you know in a good, resourceful way, or whatever, you know what I mean? And into the want and waste that is silly you know to shoot stuff...I've never been a horn hunter enough, you know, if I was just, if it was just to get a rack or something, I wouldn't do it, you know. I mean unless I wanted to eat it. That was the way I was raised, so I guess that that is maybe the way my dad always told me if you are not going to eat it, do not pull the trigger, you know so.

I do not do it anymore. We did it around town here, and [my son] since we got in town we'd set a few lynx sets and stuff like that, but there again, you know, you got too many people and everybody says they're going to be here and there and stuff, and you just cannot do it. You cannot do it right. And if you cannot do it right, I do not want to.

I've never got off ever shooting anything. To me, it is, I do not know, hell, I do not get off on it at all. But to me it is a renewable resource.

Main Theme: Survival/Dependence

Living a subsistence lifestyle was detrimental to individuals continuing a self-reliant lifestyle. In some cases the need to feel independent of the mainstream market culture was strong. Other individuals saw subsistence as a way of life that one could turn back to if times got hard.

Subtheme: Conserving/Respecting Resources

Having the skills necessary to obtain meat and having the legal ability to do so was very important to individuals who saw subsistence as something to fall back on when needed.

It is irritating to me to see somebody you know come up with a brand new motor

home, four brand new four-wheelers, really? You know, I mean when we've got people in the community that have gotten old enough to where they cannot go out and hunt anymore. Those are the ones that need it. To me that is subsistence. But if you can afford to make payments on all that kind of crap do you, do you really need the subsistence you know?

That is subsistence to me, you know. You do not abuse it, you use it when you need it, you know, and that was the big difference for me when we came to town it was like, you know, hey I need something right now, you know, and then you would make it happen you know...In town so called subsisting and out of town subsisting. There is a huge difference.

I drink sodas. I'm not the complete subsistence. You know, lifestyle I live as close to it as I can because I'm not off the grid. I got an electric bill. Fuel bill, so. So I do not consider myself the mountain man like half the people do where I just. I got conveniences you know. If I lived in a cabin with no heat, no water, then you could say I might be a mountain man.

Some of the Whites in this town were the ones that married into the Native side are the ones that I actually believe they want to be a part of the Native world, you know. Custom and tradition is what they're saying. But I call it subsistence it is, living off your surroundings as best you can, you know. I could do it if I went remote. But it is not time to go remote yet, you know.

I guess that would be it as far as subsistence, and the fact that the state of Alaska constitution mandates that we have subsistence use of our animals and somehow we need to get our management back to that core use of the animals the size of the herds. Because the day that the numbers are low, they're going to shut it off, which means I will have to go to town and buy meat.

If you are going to live that kind of lifestyle, if you are able to support you and your family comfortably and you really do not need the meat, I wouldn't go after it. I mean I never have.

If I do not get one, I'm not going to starve to death. I really enjoy the meat. I like the flavor, and I think it is probably one of the more healthier meats you could ever eat. But just because I do not get one doesn't mean I'm going to go hungry.

It is like why would I go out and shoot something I do not, I do not need it. You know, I mean, for God sakes you are not going to go hungry in this town. You know, because there is, I mean there is plenty. There is plenty of hunters that you know, enjoy doing it, if you help them out a little a bit, help them pack their meat in, stuff like that, they're going to hook ya up, you know so.

If I got to the point where to I actually needed it, yes I would get on the road kill list and you know, do, you know go that, that route. Which if there is absolutely

nothing wrong with that because we get, I mean we get a lot of moose that get hit by the train and, you know, things like that.

One individual saw hunting not only as an activity to obtain food, but also as an activity that brought him enjoyment.

One of my priorities it is, and technically as far as meat goes you cannot, you know, it is tough to beat a moose because that is enough to last you all year if not more, so the sheep is just, it is kind of, I guess you might say it is a manly thing. Because it is something that not everybody gets a chance to do.

I mean there is, there is two reasons you hunt, you enjoy it and for the, for the, you know, the meat you know, the food. I mean its plus it is you know, it is just an enjoyable thing to do as far as I'm concerned. Or just outdoor activities.

It is just the thrill of the hunt. I mean that is that is the way we're made. I mean basically we're supreme predator, so. Eyes in front of our head, not on the side of our head. We are, that is just the way it is.

Having a self-reliant attitude and skill set was apparent in other activities aside from hunting. These activities included general maintenance, construction, and caring for a home and vehicle.

I learned how to do a lot of things, and living out here I had to work on my own stuff, and you know I cannot call an electrician or a plumber, so I had to learn how to do my plumber and a little bit of electricity. A little bit of everything.

Like this airport out here. I'm the guy that maintains that you, I plow it. I got a really nice kid at the other end now that he flies to and he's been quite a bit of help. But any kind of maintenance on the road and the other stuff over here is, I do it or it doesn't get done very much. The DOT boys do not come across the railroad tracks. So, if there is a hole you know, well I do not fill it, probably doesn't get filled, but you know, the, well the lump of gravel down there is one of the 360 dollar loads that I've spread around this year.

Being aware of future emergencies and planning accordingly was an important value for participants. In remote settings, individuals realized the possibility of needing to take care of a situation themselves and the value of being prepared.

Just plan ahead and you know, do not totally depend on other people, you know. Take care of your of yourself, you know, you gotta watch out for yourself, watch

out for others, try and take care of the others who are around you. Because we, I mean we've been, I've been snowmachining with people that, you get out there, and they do not have any gear, and you have to turn around and come because it is like well that, that is not going to work, you know.

Just be prepared, you know, take everything slow. I taught them all to carry a pocket knife and a lighter, maybe two lighters you know, one inside your coat, one in your pocket, and the principle he's got a lighter and a pocket knife. And I says, all my kids carry them. What if the A-bomb hits and they cannot make it here? He's gotta be able to make a fire or survive somehow.

And I said all my kids carry them...and [he said} well they're not allowed in schools and I says, he's going to carry it. Period. He's not going to cut nobody with it. I didn't teach him to kill. I taught him survival with it. So, you want to take it from him. I'll come get it, but he'll have it tomorrow.

A pocket knife [is] just nice to have...And you can make a lot of things with a pocket knife. The one I got in my pocket, I could take a whole moose apart with it.

But the one thing my dad taught me was if one day he looked at me because we were sheet rocking this house, and there was supposed to be four other people show up to help, and it is lunch time, and he looks at me and he goes, yup, just what I figured out of them boys you know. All I can tell you son is you just do not depend on another son of a bitch out there to get something done. Do it yourself. So that is, I try to live that way a little bit too. But if I need help I will call.

If you are going to live here you should have at least one good weapon, or I got more than I need, but I'm not going to be caught short handed, so. And, you know, I do not really think of that part of it a lot, but it can, it could happen. You know, you could come to a time where you cannot find nothing. No gun. Shoes, anything, I mean you cannot buy fuel. So you should have enough knowledge, and you should have some weapons to be able, if you gotta, even just a .22, you can eat with a .22. And like I say, be able to make a fire.

All I want to do is teach them to survive if America comes under attack and cannot, you know, there is no troops here to be able to hide and survive without getting shot. I try not to think about the war part of it if it came to that, but if it does, at least I know I do not got to worry about my kids. Wherever they're at they will be able to... have the knowledge to go into the woods and not freeze to death or starve to death.

It is just information and knowledge on, on basic living and survival because I'm worried, and I'm afraid there is going to come when these kids are going to have to know how to do those things. I hope it doesn't happen. I hope this country wakes up. Or the other half, we cannot keep handing all this stuff out to these

people. We're going to go broke fast. We're going to end. The country's going to end up like Detroit.

These kids have to know how to do this. They have to know how to take care of themselves. They have to know how to take care of animals. All three of these kids run that sawmill. And, and so she and her boyfriend and he has taught her boyfriend how to run that sawmill. He says if you are going to run with us, you have to know how to do these things. And, and if you two are going to stay together, you are going to have to help build that cabin.

Have you talked to [my neighbor]? He's the only true mountain man in this town that I know of. As far a mountain man. You know he lived in a house like I do, but when he goes remote, he knows how to survive. And he do not take that much with him, so. And he can make it. I've seen him do some things in my day.

Individuals spoke of having a long-term dependence on game meat, particularly moose and caribou. Meat was used to supplement their living expenses and assist in living a simpler and more self-reliant lifestyle. Moose was important as food for the entire family, while fur trapping was an activity to bring in additional income.

We spend the winters, or I did by myself, several years, and I just come in the summer and find some work to make enough money to buy enough stuff to go out and spend another winter, and then when [my wife] came along, then we [made] hats and stuff like that. We used to make fur stuff, still got a little bit of that going, but not much. But we'd make stuff, and we'd set up a stand down at the corner on the parks highway there, and we'd sell stuff in the summer and then just buy enough stuff, and summer's pretty short and then in September or late August, we'd pack up and head back out, you know.

Used to grind up the moose for [our son] and put it in baby food thing, and instead of baby food you know we give him moose meat when he was a little kid, you know, and [our daughter] the same way. I do not even like beef, you know. Do not have it...moose is very important in our life.

I could say sure I could get my firewood. I go out and cut the firewood, we burn wood we try to get a moose every year, caribou and a moose at least, and pick our berries and stuff, but to me that is just normal living. I do not call it subsistence. I just call that just like if you had sweet corn growing, would you eat? It is just like here. There is berries out here, why do not I go pick them? Moose out there and it is in good shape, bang, you know, you get it, and you got your meat, and you do not have to buy some funky old beef.

It'd be silly not to eat moose meat when your living here, you know...I mean I

like moose meat and that is all I ever eat, and that is, you know, we have moose sometimes three times a day. We have moose burger for breakfast.

We have moose burger for breakfast, not on bread or nothing, just fry up a good moose hamburger, you know, just like a steak practically...not a day goes by we do not eat moose.

I wish I could hook up with [my neighbor] or somebody sometime and do that because that would be really nice just because it is a change of pace, you know, and some good quality food that'd be good. But I've never done it, you know. We just, it's moose, moose and caribou. Another every once in a while in the spring we eat beaver, you know, if you're trapping beaver. Beaver's real good.

We like the meat too because it's excellent food, you know. It is really, you eat the hind quarters usually and then give the rib cage and stuff too. It's good dog food; you can dry it or give it to your dogs, you know. Yeah, anything like that you catch, you know, that dogs do not like martin or wolf or coyote or nothing like, but they love beaver. Beaver and lynx too, they'll eat lynx too. But you eat lynx too.

We can pull any, depending on the size of the animal, we can pull anywhere from 700 to a 1000 pounds of meat off of a moose. Caribou is usually probably 400 to 700 pounds of meat....that is feeding three households.

Oh yeah we big on berries, you know. We got a 5-gallon bucket last weekend. Mostly 5. Cranberries are just, try to get them because they like make that cranberry's ketchups good on the moose burger you know. We try to score on the berries. It is just, it is just better for ya. You know you cannot buy anything that good. And they're right here. We usually try to get 10, 12 gallons at least, you know. Blueberries and, most score on the cranberries as good, but little harder to find.

He went with three buddies, and they all got their limit. And that is the main meat that we eat. I would, we would really miss that if we couldn't get salmon. That would, we'd really miss that.

One individual mentioned the sense of pride he had in being able to obtain meat. Being a provider was an element of maleness that was important not only to him, but to his spouse.

If I didn't get anything, I'd be a little disappointed, but, hey, that was the way it was meant to be if it, you know, there just, if I cannot find a moose in 2 weeks, I've always said, then you do not deserve one. You [are not a] hunter. And I never went without a moose.

I was asking [my wife] what was it about me to start with because I didn't chase her. So, and she goes, well I knew that you would. I would always have moose meat if I was with you.

Individuals often defined the term subsistence as an activity where one was reliant upon the land and utilized the natural resources in a respectful and nonwasteful manner. For many, subsistence was an integral way of life to living in rural places.

Every day was a day of subsistence. Because we had no running water, no electricity. So you had to make sure you had firewood, and that is what, what the first snowmachine was used for was to gather firewood and haul water out of the crick. Because up until that point we melted snow.

It seemed like a very simple adaptation being back in that valley, you know, and it was just the four of us. But every day was a day of survival. You had to get the water in. You had to in the morning, you had to make sure the Coleman lanterns were filled with blaso. We had just a little small propane cook stove that had come out of a travel trailer. And a little, small wood stove for heat, and it was the first cabin was a 1-room cabin.

Subsistence means a way of life, a lifestyle for us. It means food in the freezer for a whole year. And I guess that is primarily it.

A father with his five boys moved here and lived in a tent all winter. It was very cold that winter. They didn't have coats. My mom bought them all coats. They just were really poor. They were from New Mexico, Albuquerque. They came up here on a shoestring. And they had caribou meat. They would cut it into strips and cook it in the pan and pepper, salt and pepper it, and that was what they ate for their mainstay. They didn't have anything else.

One individual saw subsistence as a privilege, not a necessity.

Subsistence seems to me to mean that in order to survive you have to be able to participate in these things. You have to collect berries. You have to kill a caribou or a moose to provide for your family and to eat, and if you didn't then you may go hungry, or you may not have as you know, you may suffer from malnutrition because you wouldn't have other ways of getting food. I mean, our life isn't going to change if we cannot pick berries. It is wonderful, and we know that they're super healthy, and they're plentiful, and we appreciate the fact that we can do that, but we're not going to die if we cannot pick berries, you know. So I wouldn't think of us as subsistence people, although we value the privilege of being able to do all that.

When I see the subsistence and I see people that I know do not need the meat or

they have a good income and they're on subsistence, it is upsetting. When I hear that they can go into the park to hunt, it is upsetting.

Main Theme: Freedom as a Value

Freedom was often mentioned as having great value by participants. Subsisting on the local resources was considered to be a freedom, having equality, being free of state and federal laws, and having the ability to live in a place that allowed you to choose your own occupation in life were strong themes among several individuals.

Subtheme: Free of State/Federal Laws

Regulations were seen as having their place, but were often seen as restrictive or harmful to the management of the local natural environment.

I'm hoping that the hunting doesn't get destroyed up here by rules and regulations, and I mean as a user of the herds I have to watch the animal populations because it is important for the following year. And the following year after that. And so I'm concerned about the moose and caribou calf population survival rate in order to have those animals to hunt.

Everybody feels like they have the right to get animal and what they do not realize is that they're not the only ones. I mean and it is not even just the people that they're seeing on their trail and their hunting spot. I mean there are just thousands of people who feel that they have, or hundreds, I do not know. It would be interesting to know how many people are out there right now hunting an animal. And there just are not that many animals. I mean we've flown this country. We have hiked this country. We've snowmachined it. We've dog mushed it. And it just cannot sustain it. It just cannot. And so, it is sad, you know. I mean it is sad all the way around.

I've lived in Montana for a little while too. And basically everything's bought up down there, you know. There is no, basically it is, private ground or forest service, but around here it is, there is still a lot of, you know, state ground, what not, BLM, which, technically is ours anyway so, we the people. So, supposed to be anyway.

If I could change something? I'd make it more readily available. I mean let the

hunting, I mean as far as the rules and regulations. I mean there needs to be some out there because otherwise there wouldn't be any left. Rather, I mean just because you live out in the bush why, like I say, our state constitution says all natural resources shall be utilized for maximum benefit for Alaskans. Well, just because you choose to live in the bush, why should you get more preferential treatment than someone that is living in Anchorage or Fairbanks you know?

I think it should be more even for everyone. I mean we've got fish and game if there is a low density area, well, just back off the number of animals taken in that area, and if it is a high density, well, up the animals that are taken in that area, you know, that is what we're paying them for I mean, you know.

You tell me, is that subsisting there or is me sitting here in this house and driving out back somewhere, and I cannot do that because its Native land now.

I'm sure there probably be more restrictions coming down the road, but it seems like it is just going that way all over. I mean it just seems to be. Your seasons are getting shorter and, limitations on as far as where you can go and what you can do. There is probably more limitations in the future. More people bring more pressure on that, you know, on the game animals that are in the area.

As far as like, yeah, the Park Service and BLM, you know, they're getting, you know, it is getting to where, yeah I mean, it is technically our constitution you know says we the people are supposed to own everything you know... I do not see where they need 6 million acres... the old park was more than enough... So basically you are making it off limits to probably three-fourths if not more people of America. Which I do not agree with you know, when technically we're supposed to own it all.

That is a real sore subject with me as far as the Native corporation, I mean, I guess they are state constitution is ratified 58, 59, and as far as I know the Native Claims didn't come along until 72. Well this is all well and good, but we've got a constitution that was ratified in 58 and 59 that says you know, all the resources shall be utilized for everybody so it isn't like they're this unified, Native group here in Alaska. They were not unified here. They fought amongst themselves all the time. And like I say, they had no form of government. And they had no standing military to defend it, so I do not really see how they can lay claim to any of this stuff you know.

I mean if you, look into the constitution at all it says we the people are a government and basically everything belongs to us, I mean you know, for future generations you know, and if you keep, if you keep taking, parts here and parts there, and then all of a sudden what's going to be left? Nothing, you know, so, for future generations. It you know, it just isn't about me right now, it is about, it is about future generations down the road to utilize this. Which is great, you know. I guess freedom, I guess, is what it comes down to.

Just the freedom to enjoy these things that you know, that were basically bought and paid for in blood, you know, because I mean look at all the wars, you know, that all the people that, you know, gave their sacrifice so that we could have this country. Because America, basically America was an experiment in freedom, you know, so our founders lived under a suppressive government for so many years that let's go here and start something different where the people, the power generates out from the people rather than from a few elites down towards the people, it just from the people up, and just to have that opportunity it is very highly valued you know, to me anyway. So yup, the sacrifices that were made to have these freedoms you know, it means a lot to me anyway.

One time I thought about getting a piece of ground and building a house, so I'm kind of saving my money right now towards that, but yeah, if I had a piece of ground with a house on it and everything was free and clear, all my extra time would be spent hunting and fishing. Absolutely. Yeah, I mean I have priorities you know, but, yeah, I mean you know, a roof over my head number one right now, but if everything was free and clear, and I had 10 cord of wood all stacked up and ready for winter, and [then] I'd probably be up there right now

I guess if there is, was one thing, one point I wanted to bring across was the ground being locked up, I just, I just do not agree with it because it is, like I say, each year you lose a little more a little more, what's future generations going to have to enjoy, but that is, that is just my thoughts on it. I mean it is, you know, how many acres do they need under park or preserve or off limits, it is like, you know, what good is it, you know? Fly over 30,000 feet and look down, you know. It is like, that is no way to enjoy the ground or the opportunities that are presented here.

Subtheme: Free of State/Federal Laws

Long-standing Cantwell residents lamented the changes and the freedoms they used to experience regarding game harvest that had changed with stricter rules and increased enforcement.

You can keep them going through the winter and stuff, you know, but when you come to town, aw man, you cannot, you cannot go anywhere, you cannot do anything. You get so many and then the cost is, whooo, costs a lot of money, you know. Because you cannot just go out and pop a moose, and say I'm going to feed my dogs, oh yeah, right you know. Not anymore you cannot. You know one time you could do that kind of stuff, but you are not going to do it now, so.

I moved here especially when they had the tier-two system was based on a lot of

where you lived, how long you lived there, where you buy your gas, and to draw that tag I was drawing it in Anchorage. But I kind of moved to Palmer, well Eagle River, Palmer, Wasilla, and then I moved to Cantwell in 1986. But the main reason was for what's here. Nature, you know, being able to live off of what's around you. And the other was to draw those tags you know. Because it was getting hard to draw in there, they were getting, they were going more to the elder side, and I was on the low end.

I cannot go out and shoot a short moose now. I gotta find one with four brow tines or 50 inches, so it did change, not my lifestyle, but it changed the way I'm going to hunt this fall. Or I can say that. And I can hunt just like I normally hunted, just not let them know what I shot. I can still go out and still shoot a 40-inch moose and I can lie to them when I gotta write down I gotta 40-inch moose, with four brow tines although it has two and two. And if they do not see it, then what do they know, but that is cheating, you know. It is not poaching; it is living the way you know it should be. So, so Anchorage or wherever all them hunters are from affected my hunt this year. Not my lifestyle, but my hunt, the way it is going to be hunted.

There are areas you know, but you gotta get up high, get above the alders and stuff. And, there again you are dealing with who owns this land to cross over into there and this, so it kind of just takes the wind out of your sails.

Subtheme: Free to Live Chosen Lifestyle

For some, rural preference issues were discussed. Some participants felt strongly that individuals living in rural communities should have priority over local resources while other individuals felt that all Alaskans, not only local communities, should have access to Cantwell's resources.

Even though we do not entirely live off the land, we certainly use all of that stuff. The only thing I do not like about the word subsistence is that if it means that I have certain rights because I live here, I can hunt a moose if the moose is scarce, and I can later than somebody from Fairbanks coming out here, or I can get a smaller moose; I do not like that part of it. Because I think everything should be equal. Even though I know it cannot be. You know it would be like going to Fairbanks saying, well you cannot shop at Fred Meyers, it is just for people who live in this area. Now that'd be hurtful. But, you know it is, you know and, the Natives think they can fish when there is no fish, and some people depend upon the moose think they can hunt if there is no moose, so.

I have hard feelings with the state. Nothing personal, it is just their policies that really annoy me...I have rural preference issues. Because we do not live in Anchorage and the demographics speak for themselves the ones that make, the politicians and the one that won't. I mean we're a minority in our own state. It is just something we have to deal with.

Who am I to say Joe Blow from Bolden cannot come up and try to shoot a moose? He might appreciate, have more appreciation for conservation and game than anybody in this town you know. Why shouldn't he be able to do it?

See we didn't used to have a bad reputation here. It is just come about since the 80s. Since people started moving in here that just are such renegades. They just are so different I mean they just. You do not tell them anything and they do not like the rules. They do not like anybody's rules. They're against the government, but they're all willing to take it. I mean they get subsistence oil, some of them are working, and they still get so much allowance for subsistence oil, and they get subsistence hunting, they get subsistence fishing. And I'm thinking, you're so against the government, and yet those are the very people that are giving you the things for free; what is it that you do not like about it? I do not understand it. It is kind of like I want it, but I do not want anybody else to have it.

I mean if you want to pay the money and fly out to some remote area and, and harvest an animal, you know, you know why, why should the people that are already out there have preference over that, that particular event, you know, so, but yeah well, that is just the way I see it anyway. Yeah. You know it is like they can, like up on the slope they can shoot like five caribou a day, you know, and it is like there is no way you can, you can ever utilize five caribou a day unless you are feeding your dogs with them or something like that, which would be illegal.

Subtheme: Free to Choose Occupation

One participant was adamant about leaving home and the social expectations for employment and occupation. In Cantwell was where he found a place where he could choose to be free to follow his own dreams.

The lifestyle is you kind of get to do your own thing. As much as anybody gets to do their own thing. But like if you really didn't want to be sitting in that chair, you probably wouldn't be there. So, but, and I can tell you for sure, if I didn't enjoy what I was doing I woulda' found something different. But I didn't want to be a farmer. Not that there is anything [wrong] with being a farmer. But it was not what I wanted to do. Nor did I want to be a factory worker, but, but there is way more people that are factory workers than farmers than there are that are guides,

so. But, I guess back to different strokes for different folks.

You know what I didn't like about the farm when I was a kid is that it just didn't leave you any time for much of anything else. So, but every day [I] was out there feeding, watering, pick the eggs, candle and size them, milk the cows, turn the separator, feed the pigs, you know. But, so, it didn't take into account your birthday, a hunting trip, or anything else. It was right there. You know. Every day. All the time.

Time is really important, I think. And to be able to meter your time to do the things you enjoy is probably, couple things, one if you do not, if you got your health you got most all of it. If you do not have that, you know, and I talked to Randy Cabella at the last Safari club. I think Randy's probably got a 10-digit bank account. I wouldn't trade places with him.

I feel pretty fortunate that way. For a lot of the people I think I've been able to do more of what I wanted than a lot of people have. And I think if I had been born a hundred years ago, hey I got more places by the time I was your age than my grandfather got in a hundred years.

The Ford Factory everything, nobody did anything that was complicated, you know, one guy'd put three bolts in an engine. But the next guy'd put maybe two or three bolts in a radiator. The next guy'd bolt on a gas tank, and it kept moving down the line until you had a finished product. But man, I'd be bored by the end of the shift. I cannot imagine doing it for 30 years, you know, or 40 years to whatever you know to get a retirement from those people. I feel like I been fortunate to do this, you know, where most of the people when I was a kid, you were kind of destined to do something with forest products, commercial fishing, or farming. There was not much else there.

Where I think to work in a big factory I'd be the other one. I gotta get up and do that, you know, where and my life's varied here. I do not, I guess to be a good Alaskan in this part of the world, you do not have to be very good at anything, but you gotta be willing to try about everything, you know.

But you still got to be out there. Which was neat, where like I say I could have been in the Harley Davidson factory on a press making kickstands for 30 years, you know. But well I'd been talking to myself before the end of the first day before I got to retirement. So, but, even those people get paid pretty good for doing that. But what do you want to do with your life?

Another individual also shared the story of his arrival in Alaska and the freedom he was searching for to pursue his own goals. However, he lamented that even in Alaska the freedom he had been searching for was slowly eroding.

I was not on a farm. My dad was a contractor carpenter, and that is where I did decking up here, and that is what I done pretty much since I been up here. In the summers or whatever. But down there was, that was the only escape I could see. Living in that environment was, I didn't like where I was at, but I would see a farmer, and I see he had his own little thing going, you know. So, when I came up here, when I read about this place, you know, I thought, oh man, I come up here, you know, and they was talking getting some land for nothing. Once I got up here, I [didn't see any] barbed wire, you know, fences or nothing, and nobody seems to...you just do whatever you want. And there is pretty soon got into that mindset, and then the more you studied it, you seen there was a lot of places that were off limits you, and its getting more and more; it seems like all the time.

Subtheme: Free to Live Chosen Lifestyle

One individual marveled at the general uniqueness of the specific freedoms individuals had living in Cantwell that contrasted with more regulated areas and cities.

If you are living in town, there is something going on that you got to worry about all the time. Like I can go out here, I can take a leak, isn't nobody calling the cops on me in the backyard. And that is the other deal why I'm here is the freedom. And I didn't mention that, but the freedom I have right here is, there is a lot of places you do not got that. Even in the United States. Like you go to let's take one state, New Mexico, I cannot drive down the road with a loaded rifle beside me and ammo up here. They'll throw me in jail you know

We get to do things that it is like a lot of people will never, cannot even imagine they cannot even think of it, but we get to do it and see it.

We'd have, you know, a couple of cows and calves you know bedded down right in our driveway, and so when I'd walk the kids to the bus, I mean, I would go to the bus with a shotgun just in case they charged us. You know they never did, but it was just like, I mean how many, how many states can you walk up to a school bus with a shotgun and not get arrested, you know?

You know when I was down in the states is, these people are not, they're not free, not really, I mean, and they do not really know it. I mean they kind of do, but they do not because they have never really, like I said, not everybody gets to do this. So to me this is a very special place. It is one of the last places in the United States that you can be this free, and it is slowly closing in.

While one individual felt Cantwell had a unique set of freedoms allowed to its residents, another participant felt that even in Cantwell there was an overabundance of restrictions

to his freedoms.

I do not know. Even out at the cabin I felt like I had limits. I do not know how many thousands and thousands of acres that all involved, you know, but I always...felt like if I...saw somebody else coming in where I was at they were imposing on my limits. I think anywhere you go you consciously or unconsciously create this zone...you know this is my spot. Even like in town with your yard you know, your yard is your zone and right thing you know. Like right now in this town here, I feel like I'm constricted like crazy. There [are] so many limits around here, it is unbelievable.

Subtheme: Freedom to Connect with Nature

Aside from political or social freedoms, individuals also mentioned the freedom they had to connect with the outdoors, to partake in outdoor activities that not only included hunting, but snowmachining and canoeing as well.

We get to do things that it is like a lot of people will never, cannot even imagine. They cannot even think of it, but we get to do it and see it.

I can park my snowmachines outside the cabin, jump on them, and I can head off in any direction that I want. And go until I literally run out of gas if I want to, you know. But you cannot do that in, you know, Fairbanks and Anchorage and stuff, you know, if you live inside the city limits....Here there is no rules; there [are] no fences...taking off on your, especially after, a good snowfall, I always got a sense of freedom.

Oh basically my first time up was just for the, just to see the country, hunting and fishing, what it had to offer it is just a wide open space as far as the availability of maybe just to go anywhere and do what you want. Just the opportunities to just head out and go without fences and no trespassing signs and so.

Freedom is the one, one thing that, that really sticks out in my mind. You know a lot of people look at it as living here you are limited, you are isolated, you are this, you're that, but it depends on what you are looking for. You know, like I said you'd be, you know, being able to get on your snowmachine when its, when you've got fresh snow and stuff and then just take off. I mean that is almost like a feeling of being able to fly. You know and you can do that you know on a, on a dog sled or, you know, it depends on what, what you're into.

Like on the rivers like in a canoe, I mean that is, that is a sense of freedom you know, right, right, there because...as you're kind of canoeing along like the

moose or the caribou if they're, if they're standing you know, by the edge of the river, you know, getting water or something like that, they do not pay any attention to you because they're, they do not have any threat that comes from the water. So just because you're floating by, I mean, they'll just watch you go by, but they do not, you know, head for the brush. They'll just watch you go by, so that is a sense of freedom.

So I think this is one of the last places that you can actually be free, you know. You can make your own choices and things like that. It is just like, you know, they have helmet laws and you know, and now they have got laws against smoking and, and this and that and it is like well, you know, if you are a grown up and you choose to ride a motorcycle without a helmet is it because I just didn't know the consequences? Of course you knew the consequences. You chose to do it.

While having the freedom to utilize local resources was considered a positive characteristic of Cantwell life, one participant expressed their concern that some individuals were taking advantage of the system and overharvesting resources or taking game that would be then wasted. In her mind this was an abuse of the freedoms people in Cantwell had.

There is a difference between doing your own thing and being appreciative and respectful and getting along with other people, and then there is the doing your own thing and being a rebel, you know. You are not getting along with people and you are doing your own thing shooting anything whether it is in season, out of season.

I've had people tell me that they go to a certain area where they're not supposed to fish, and they fish. And because they live here they think they can. And the people around Talkeetna, I mean, they take gunny sacks, and they catch fish, and they hide them back in the trees, and then they catch more, and they hide them, and they, so they get more than their limit. And this is a problem because then when they go dip netting down, you know, dip netting season, and they, and somebody comes back and says, oh yeah I've got 280 salmon. And I'm thinking how much of this can Alaska stand? How much before it is gone?

In this day and age hunting and killing an animal is never a right. It is a privilege. And people have begun to look at it as their right, whether they need that animal or not has nothing to do with it. They enjoy the hunting, which there is nothing wrong with enjoying the hunting, there is nothing theoretically with taking the animal for meat, but it is just completely gotten totally out of hand.

Subtheme: Free of State/Federal Laws

While individuals expressed their frustrations with the stricter regulations and hunting management policies, DENA in particular was mentioned by several as having longstanding history with Cantwell residents.

I put a park ranger, a sled, and a dog team in my Cessna and flew them over to Wonder Lake. And then I got my ass chewed from the superintendent's office because I didn't get their blessing before I put them in my airplane. Makes me not real fond of all the National Park Service people.

Well, I do not really feel like the National Park Service people are a part of our team, let me put it that way. But I know several of the people that work for them up there. Some of them I really like and some of them I'm not very fond of.

My boys go in there, my, and they get landed on by the helicopter, and they're not even on monument land. They're on state land, BLM, and oh you got your paperwork to be here. We do not need any paperwork to be here; we live here. Oh, you shouldn't be in this area. Well, you got a helicopter here, what's, you've got a motorized vehicle. Come on, you know. Louder than what I'm riding.

I went to Ruby Creek, there was a little cabin at Ruby creek was just up, that was right on the edge of the border, the old park and the new park when they came in with that antiquities act thing and build a cabin there and got into a big time with the park over that and then but just kind of got disgusted with it, burned it down, and left there, and then I came to town.

And the Park is there, another huge limit. You cannot do anything that way. And the some other limit over here, there, who knows what it is. So you are always kind of hemmed in. For a big state it is small in a lot of ways.

General attitudes of independence were voiced during the interviews. Individuals felt very strongly that freedom from governmental regulations and the general regulations of others were valuable in their lives.

A hundred years ago everybody done it. Everybody. And now, a hundred years later, maybe one-quarter of the population are hunters. So it is, it is dying off, and that is what the government wants. They want you in the store buying their beef and their pig and their all their products.

I do not believe in relying on the government to make health decisions for me or any decisions for me, you know, personally. I think that is a definite, you know,

stomp on freedom. You know, and it is slowly being taken away. It is just the way that I grew [up].

But I like the freedom. And I told you that before.

Man we gotta' turn this ship around. This countries in a real freefall I think right now, you know. It is like [we] cannot continue on.

No I do not really depend on [anybody]. I do call people for help when I need help but that, I do not depend on them you know. And I think that comes from that one line that my dad told that I told you, do not depend on, and that is his exact words. Do not depend on another son of a bitch out there.

One individual mentioned that he was “living the American dream” by being a part of Cantwell.

American dream is the best way I can say it. I do not gotta work. I can hunt and fish any day I want. I think pretty much half the people in America would love to do that. And the only reason is because I built this house out of pocket. I didn't go to a bank. That is the only reason, well, that is one of the main reasons why I do not have to work is we do not own nothing on this house or that garage or the property...how many millions of people in America that cannot say that?

I'll work, but I'll work when I want to not because, and that may be part of what I do now if because I've always been that way. I'll quit a job to get my meat to go hunting. I done it over the years and, but now as it is I can, I work when I want to now. And I wished it would have been that way all my life, but you are not forced into it, but you have kids, you going to be working. If you are a good dad anyways.

And maybe not the American dream, but my dream. And you know I worked all those years to get to where I'm able to do what I can do today. And I got it done a little bit earlier than most people in life do. Because of where I'm at also. If I was in the city I couldn't, I probably couldn't have built the house out of pocket. So you could also put cheap in there, I guess, because I get everything at a bargain or try to.

Main Theme: Family Connectedness

Family was an important theme during the interviews. Participants mentioned their children frequently and sharing activities and knowledge of the outdoors. In telling

their stories, one participant also mentioned the lifestyle change that she made moving from the city to Alaska with her husband and how she was thankful for having the opportunity to experience a rich life of homesteading, hunting, and flying around the state. Another female participant mentioned how she met her husband in Alaska after moving for work. The opportunities she experienced living and sharing a subsistence lifestyle were extremely valuable to her.

Subtheme: Spending Time Outdoors as a Family

Husband-wife connections were often mentioned. The need to be partnered and sharing in life was important for connectedness.

If I had a husband here, I could live like I did up in the Arctic to where you were eat nothing but meat from the land. Where here I go to town and buy hamburger instead.

After living and working in Chicago and Detroit, you know, and my dad hunted when we lived in upper Michigan. We did fishing and camping every summer. And you know, and so I think back, and it has to be because of Larry. Because of that man. And, and I tell people it was because of [my first husband] that I came to Alaska, and it is because of [my second husband] that I was able to stay in Alaska.

Especially when you are in a small community like this. You need a mate. You need a mate just for those long days.

When I was 30 I came up here for the whole summer with a couple girlfriends that were both teachers. They drove a little dry cleaner van, fitted as a camper, and went all over the state and never expected to see it again. Then next year that girlfriend decided she was going to get married, so I stood up for her wedding and I came back to go in with the adventure in Alaska. And the next year I got married up here to the Eskimo in the Arctic.

Selby Lake because it is near the Kobuk River and my husband came from that area on the Kobuk River. So that is where we lived. From, from about 80, no, before 80, the 11 years before 80 is when I was married and lived there.

I came to Alaska in 1965. My first husband and I were a guide and outfitter. Our

daughter was born on the Oregon, but she celebrated every birthday up here. My son was born in Fairbanks in 69. [My daughter] was born in 64. My first seven years up here was in the bush. And I'm glad I had that opportunity.

My choice was to...go...sitting up in the supercub or do you want to be tied down in the supercub? I said, I'll sit. I'm here because of him. And I'm still here because of him.

Subtheme: Sharing/Passing Knowledge to Children

Passing knowledge to one's children while cultivating their skills and teaching values of hard work and self-reliance was a common theme.

For every one of them, and they can vouch for this, is that they find their own path. They be who they really are. They have the courage to do that, to be strong in themselves, you know. All of them are animal lovers. I'm happy with that. They're kind to animals they are, they are kind to kids, kind to people, they get along with people.

We've lost many people in airplanes, but we still go. Airplane noise is good noise. The smell of aviation gas in the morning, no. And we sent Chris to Emery Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona for 2 years. And so he has a lot of his mechanic background from that, and then my son-in-law is, was a certified light duty mechanic at Alaska's Sales and Service. And so they both crank wrenches on everything.

[Hunting is] a dying thing, and I'd rather see people shoot their own meat than have to go all the way to town and buy beef, get a cooler, bring it back, you know. The meats here, so if you want to learn, I'll show ya. And, you know, I just taught it to my kids, they, I didn't force it on them, didn't force any of it.

You cannot turn your back on your family is what I tell them. Although a lot of them do. I've, I've seen a lot of people. Kid's 18, boom, kicks them in the ass, you graduated high school, you are done. You are on your own. That do not right. I mean, sure, you want to make him a man. If you are going to do that, put him in the military or that way at least you're not just throwing him completely out. And what's he going to do? What did you teach him? Did you teach him how to work or find a job or get a job? All you done is raise him to 18 and kicked him on the street. Now what's he going to be? If you didn't teach him nothing, he's going to be nothing.

Subtheme: Spending Time Outdoors as a Family

One woman's connection to her brother and their combined love of the outdoors was shared during an interview. Their mutual love of the outdoors helped them to bond as siblings.

There [are] these activities that used the environment you were living in. And so when certain things have happened, I cannot think of an exact example, and I thought boy, who would I want to tell that to? Well in, in general anything that I find to be unusually exciting like that the person I would want to tell it to would be my brother. I wouldn't call my sister, either of my sisters, and tell them the story. I would call my brother and tell him the story. Well he died from cancer a few years ago. I miss my brother. I do not have anybody to tell my best story to. Who would appreciate my best story... he was tuned in to the kind of things I would find exciting up here.

Individuals mentioned the value of completing activities together as a family in the outdoors and their decades-long memories and connections they had with Cantwell.

We pretty much have harvested off the land for oh goodness, how many years now? 35? 45? 48 years now. Pretty soon it will be the big 5-0 for me and my family.

First of all it is my kids and my wife. But, and then hunting and fishing is after that. But they come first. And that is why we've always went together. You know, and like when we're all together I took a brother, one of her brothers, whoever could fit in the truck or if you had a four-wheeler you could come in and follow us in, bring a tent, whatever.

Just kind of like [to] travel alone, you know, but not alone, I mean, with [my son] or [my daughter] or [my wife], you know. Alone being a family is just like, you know. I usually end up being by myself like [my son], the last time we was together you know, which was even better, yet if they're into it... in the summer times there is blueberry picking and there is fishing and stuff. I used to do a lot of fishing, you know, when the kids were little. But after they got old enough to where they were doing their own thing, I didn't fish as much.

I went hunting with my brother, but I didn't hunt because I was going to kill it. I just went with him to keep [him] company. The men in our family were the hunter. We were the gatherers. We were the berry pickers, the jam makers. The, put up the food, cook the food. Yeah. They were the hunters.

Not only do we enjoy eating that meat, but it becomes a family affair of going out

and doing the hunt.

One individual expressed a particular nostalgia for life in Cantwell when his children were still young and shared in activities together.

There is a lot, there is really that I miss about Cantwell, you know, like when my kids were little and things like that. Because it was, it was a different, it was a different time, you know, and I wish that we could evolve back in time and do that again.

We used to go blueberry picking. You know, my in-laws would come up and, you know, when they blueberries are ripe, you know, they would call, are blueberries ready yet? You know, and, and the kids and I are jumped on the four-wheelers, not quite yet, you know, give it another week or, something like that. Then they would, then the whole herd would come up. It is just special.

I go down to broad pass... we used to fish down there a lot. It was kind of...one of those...when they [were] growing up, I was working at the coal mine, pardon, and when I would get home you know, they were just little, and they would be penned up in the house all day. So we'd look, and we'd just find some place to go fishing or something like that. Canoeing or if nothing else, we just go out and build a campfire and roast marshmallows or just to get out. But we used to do that quite a bit. I really miss those days. I wish they were still little.

For one individual, in addition to hunting for meat and sharing the experience with his family, spreading the ashes of his two brothers who had passed away was a yearly ritual that held deep meaning.

That is just part of my yearly deal. I spread ashes out there from two of my brothers, and that is part of the reason I go, but main reason is meat and family-oriented trip. It is not Hawaii, it is not Arizona, it is the one trip I do a year that if you want to go, jump in, the families going, and we [have] done it all our lives.

Main Theme: Finances: Economics

Utilizing local resources as a way in which to supplement one's income was frequently mentioned. Even though Cantwell was on a road system, the nearest large stores were several hours away, and participants lamented the high cost of gas for travel.

Subtheme: Supplementing Income with Subsistence

Using local resources, such as fur trapping or selling of shed antlers, was a way for individuals to supplement their income.

I liked the lifestyle and also for income because I did work seasonal. I was pretty successful at it, you know. I never got rich, but what I would do I either sell my furs if I was really needing money in Fairbanks, or if I could afford it, I would send them out to Idaho and get them tanned up and then sell them to the tourists in the summer time, and I could almost triple my money.

You can get more money, making a hat, like a hide right there is like they're a 100 bucks; that is what I charge. You can get more for them. Right. But then, you make a hat, it is 250 dollars. And you can get two hats out of one fox hide.

...[fishing] was part of your income too for my family. My dad had a school bus contract out of Glennallen area, copper center, and it was a source of summertime income.

And that is the other thing picking up the sheds. That makes my gas money to go hunting through, by selling the sheds off.

Basically it is just the same thing. It is another, it is monetary gain is part of it. And it is just another outdoor activity that is very enjoyable. It is a challenge. It is tough to do, you know, especially up here in Alaska where basically it is either from a snowmobile or an ATV or something like that, you know, where you have and up here generally it is a lot of work because if you are going to run a big line you've got line camps to set up there in the summertime.

Oh yeah we just never hardly ever sell. Just usually cut them up and make stuff. That was the only way you could ever make any because we never did catch enough to sell on the volume you know. We did it on foot for the most part, for years. Dogs and the right sled, skis, or snowshoes, you know, and like I say, it was a guaranteed way to go broke. Stay broke.

It is a lot of work, it really is...But it can be very beneficial as far as monetary gain. The prices have come up a little bit from 10, 15 years ago so. Things have turned around a little bit.

Things are turning around. And actually you wouldn't think much of it, but even muskrats are even back up to around 10 bucks a piece. So and then that is pretty good money so. And muskrats you know, which you know, for quite some time, for a buck and a half or something like that. No it is definitely another source of income, you know, plus you gotta do something in the wintertime here, you know. And there is just so much dark and cold here if you do not keep active.

Subtheme: High Costs Associated with Living Rurally

One individual felt that out-of-town hunters who could afford airplanes and more expensive equipment were not competing fairly with local hunters who had less money to finance their own hunting ventures.

If you are using airplanes, you are not subsistence. If you can afford that airplane, you can afford to live in a town, you know. Because that airplane cost more than most annual pay. But, you know, I guess he is a mountain man he goes out there, but in an airplane? It is aught 13 but still. To hunt, I do not think you need an airplane.

They got these ones on TV, this guy's got a super cub. Okay, he flies out to remote Alaska, but that is not a mountain man. That airplane cost probably when you bought it, cost 40,000 so, how can you call yourself a mountain man and use an airplane? You go out there on foot, snowshoes, a horse, you know, horse drawn wagon, then you are doing the mountain man thing. Not in an airplane or a snowmachine.

It is like a country boy versus city boy scenario is the way I see it. Because he's got the money. He's got the airplane. He flies okay. I've got a beat up Ford pickup I've had for 29 years. And I paid 750 bucks for it. There is a similarity there. Okay I got a motorized vehicle; he's got a motorized vehicle. But the difference is I'm on the ground, he can cover 20 times the country I can cover in a day.

You know you going to spend, you know, what, 2,500 dollars to go make a trip, go down and pick up some fish or something, you know. I mean, I do not know, you know. It is subsisting, it is a subsistence event, but to pull that subsistence thing off, you know, is like, course I guess you can use the same thing when somebody comes up here hunting is going to spend, lose a week's work spend 1500 to 2000 dollars to get rigged up, gasoline and stuff, and come up here. 80,000 motorhome and go up to Denali.

I'd like to see the rural people to be able to harvest the meat first, you know, and then if they want to come out and have their little vacations or whatever they can do that. None of us can even afford to even put gas in an RV let alone own one you know.

As a lifestyle, individuals spoke about their personal views regarding the attainment of monetary wealth. The culture of living off the land generally focused on enjoying activities and having free time unburdened by steady employment.

Like I say I got educated by some of them people out at the cabin you know, like I said about, you know, from palmer there and places, they say hey man, you know, you just happen to live out here, I fought like heck all year to save enough money to come out here and do this, you know, and I'm entitled to my week out. You know, I take my hat off to you. Because a lot of people weren't that fortunate or cannot do it or unwilling to do it or whatever. To be broke all the time. And to do what we were doing, that is exactly what you had to be. And that is why my wife got sick of it. You know, it is just you never got anything ahead. You never got anything, so if you didn't get your rewards in another way then very few people will do it.

Living here is a lot cheaper because you are not keeping up with the Joneses. It is a lifestyle that you do your own thing.

I'd like to think I didn't have to do anything you know it'd be nice to be there. But that is part of paying for previous years I been here. I knew it would happen. Not making, not saving, because there was nothing to save you know. I always told everybody I would get a steady job when I'm 60. Now I'm over 60, and I still haven't got a steady job, but I'm still, I'm going to work until they bury me, but that is all right. I decided long time, growing up I said, I'm going to, everybody work for 40 years and then they got their watch and then rolled around for a while and then tipped over. I decided I was going to if I can still hop around pretty good, I was going to do just the opposite.

I'm retired from the coal mine in Healy... I worked there for 10 years and I quit working there and started running around the country you know working different jobs, seasonal work, and then total subsistence lifestyle in the winter time. You know with dog teams, trapping, or something like that you know.

Now I cannot imagine paying 5 dollars a gallon for gas...you gotta like it to do it. A lot of people like you say it just you cannot afford to do it. You can still go out and do it I'm just saying but you cannot make any money. Now I'll bet if, if that is your sole purpose of doing it then, do not go. But if you can see the value and the other parts of it then it is well worth your time. You know, you might not have any money at the end of the year, but you'll have some memories that you cannot put a dollar sign on ya know... it just gets in your blood, good life...To be mandatory for everybody for a while.

Subsistence was seen as a way to supplement income. While hunting gas for a vehicle and ammunition was expensive, the amount of meat harvested from a moose was worth more than store purchased meat.

Oh hell I'd hate like the Dickens to go down and have to buy meat. I can only imagine and especially junk meat, you know, like this beef... no way I'd want to

pay that for sure. I do not know if we could afford to do it. But if you look at it that way you can take 500 pounds or something of meat, go to the store and pay 500 pounds of good meat, it is going to cost you a bunch, you know. So in that respect moose is worth a lot of money.

I think living off the land and supplementing your income, there is a huge divide between those two statements though. Do not you? Living off the land in my book, is getting predominantly everything you need to eat off the land. There do not nobody around here that does that. Supplementing. Your lifestyle, I'll go with that. That is what they should call it. Instead of subsistence you call it supplementing.

We do live in a rural area, so we need food, you know, and living on the kind of income that most of live around here it supplements...our income, but I do not think that is the right word. It helps us use the money for other things. You know we have to buy fuel, oil, heating oil, you know, gas and heating. Drive to Fairbanks or Wasilla or whatever to go to the grocery store, and it is expensive. And so it helps me in that way, you know; I do not have to drive.

Subtheme: High Costs Associated with Living Rurally

Changing hunting regulations and outside pressures worried participants who felt that they could no longer afford to subsist or that the opportunities for hunting would be removed due to an even greater influx of outsiders.

They're already talking about, you know, building a gas line from Anchorage through the pass to Donlin Creek. So, I'm thinking that those kind of things are probably in our future, you know. It is going to be more money for people. But I think that there is our sacrifices probably going to be our subsistence. That is what I see.

Here I can live off the, get a moose or fish or, could always go back to, cannot go back, totally go back to subsistence, but you subsidize your income with what you got. Used to be a long time ago when, when I was growing up used to be lots of little, lots of little animals, and we just go out and get it, but not anymore. Used to be lots of rabbits and lots of chickens and hardly any last few years. This road used to be full of chickens every morning; every morning you can go out and get your, your dinner. Not anymore.

It is tough to find firewood around here, you know, without driving, you know. Why should the locals have to pay a 100 dollar bill just to go across ground that we've already bought, we've already bought once from the Russians, you know.

How many times do we have to pay to use it, you know.

With gas being what it is, 4, 5, you know, well, where, I seen it almost 5 bucks down here, you know, 4 something, 4.50, 4.60, 4.80, you know. That kind of hinders your traveling just a little bit.

I can go, yeah. My wife can go. My kid can go. But none of them are going to, you know, pay for a hunt.

You know, but, no I just you know, if they, if they're going to charge a hundred dollars for going across the ground or to pick blueberries on the ground, I do not paying it. I'll just go someplace else.

I'll go down on a mountain anytime group of people want to fly. You know, if they're willing to pay for the airplane ah hey, I'm willing to fly. But most of our money comes from guided hunts. But, and that is subsistence, it is, you know, if the animals weren't here, I couldn't do it. So I'm probably the only subsistence hunter, but I'm not allowed caribou here for you gotta be a resident. And 99% of my people are nonresidents because most of the residents do not want to spend any money.

For one individual, the increased fees he had to pay to access land for berry harvest kept him and other locals from accessing local areas.

Ahtna corporation they have...so much of the ground around here tied up, it is tough just to find firewood or, like you say, it is a hundred dollars to go pick blueberries on their ground, which, well, why do that if you are, you know, why not just go to the grocery store and buy a hundred dollars' worth? And you do not have to work for them.

Main Theme: Health

The negative health effects associated with eating nongame meat was mentioned during the interviews. Beef specifically was mentioned as being unhealthy due to the controlled substances in the feed and the fatty nature of the meat. Eating subsistence foods was preferred for digestive reasons as well.

Subtheme: Subsistence Is Healthier than Store Purchased

I just do not know what the beef is fed or inoculations or whatever. And there is a lot of fat in beef. Whenever I've cooked beef myself for something I always drain it real good. Sometimes even rinse it before I use it in something because there is so much fat and, and then when I see something like real pink hamburger and I know that they have put something in it or like that pink slime stuff that they were using that frothy stuff, and that just, that just really turned me off even more to beef.

I cannot really handle beef. It really upsets my stomach because of all the, I do not know, the hormones or the whatever they feed them, give them for shots or whatever, it really upsets my stomach. And so wild meat has always been easier for me to digest. And it is leaner in fat and it is something that I've always been used to.

If I were eating meat I'd want to eat moose. Even if I was living in Anchorage, you know, I wouldn't want to have to eat that beef from the feed lots.

Subtheme: Use of Local Herbs/Berries

Additionally, the health benefits derived from eating local berries and rose hips was also mentioned as being a strong part of one individual's lifestyle.

I need to fill up a few containers with blueberries and cranberries and moss berries, and so that is kind of a treat during the holidays. And then also I've seen a lot of rose hips, our wild roses. You take the rose hip and when, if you make jam or jelly, you use that and mix that in with your berries and cook them cook the hip because it is full of vitamin C.

Main Theme: Community Connectedness

The connected nature of the community was spoken of frequently by participants. Sharing of meat and other resources, socializing among friends and youth, and aiding in the general infrastructure of a community were all elements of Cantwell life. Although the community had grown and changed over the decades, individuals still felt a deep sense of belongingness and connectedness amongst one another. During research visits, I

saw individuals share items with one another, plan get-togethers, attend church, and volunteer their time at local firefighting halls and schools. Though diverse, everyone knew everyone in the community.

Subtheme: Sharing of Resources

One of the main themes by far was the sharing of meat, particularly moose meat. Individuals shared with friends, family, and elders in the community. One individual was particularly fastidious in regards to collection and distribution of road-killed moose. During one particular site visit, the researcher was shown a hanging ribcage of moose meat that was soon to be distributed to Cantwell residents.

In my meat eating days there were always people. I never hunted myself, but somebody always gave me some moose meat or caribou. And so I always had wild game. Even in Anchorage, I would have friends come in and give me some meat for the freezer. And so definitely the whole time that I've lived in Alaska it is, I have lived where people shared what they had.

Some people would go out and like, per say, get a moose or get caribou and then bring it back and then, you know, they would, they would take what choice meats they want for, for their personal use, and then they would call the community and like get on the radio and say, come down and so and so's house, if you want a chunk of meat or something like that, or word of mouth gets around too, really fast, so. But that, yeah, that is usually how we got some meat.

I know people who were unable to pick berries because of health problems or whatever, and if people around knew berries were important to them, they would pick for them and stuff. And so yeah, I know that people will share berries. Usually that is pretty hard work for the return you get, and mostly everybody tries to get out and pick their own. They will share things like jams and whatnot that make, the products they make from the berries. You'll get little Christmas gifts and stuff like that. But definitely if somebody, if berries was important to somebody, and they could not get out and pick for whatever reason, and they were going to be here in the community through the winter, oh yeah, people would be helping them out with berries.

It is a lot of work to get a moose and, you know, bring it out and then process it, to package it and everything; that is a lot of work. And usually if somebody gets a

moose they usually have friends who pitch in with all the processing, you know, they're, I've, in my meat eating days many times I'm cutting and wrapping meat, and then that is shared, you know, whoever, certainly whoever helped with all that gets a share.

Getting your game is the prize, you know. You got your meat for the winter and you know if you get, if your boy gets one you can share it with everyone around town...come grab your piece of meat, what do you want?

We've packed three moose over the years that I couldn't get a truck to or I didn't have a four-wheeler at the time, but I always had five guys with me so all we had one piece a piece to the truck.

The guy down the road that lives it, 133, I known him since I was in high school but, he called me for meat, and so I gave him quite a bit, and he was thankful, and then this summer he comes by and he goes you know he goes I never would have made it through the winter if you had not helped me out. Things like that, that is, I appreciate that.

My dad shared meat. Not as much as I do, but I think maybe the, it was there, the learning part you know. He didn't need all that meat so hey, call people up, come get a quarter, whatever you want.

I tell people, if, hey, I need a piece of meat, I says you know where's it at. I tell ya, if I'm home or not, grab the piece you want, you know. The door's open on it, so. It is just to help out the community, you know.

I've always given meat away, you know, share. That is the other part of it. Keep everybody happy where you live is what I say. Try not to make any enemies. I know that they're not able to go out and get it their self anymore. It is mainly the old people, but I've given meat to quite capable young men that have kids too. But he's working all the time. He hasn't got time to go hunt because he's got to feed these kids. And I've never eaten any road kill, but I go get it and butcher it up and whatever, you know, whatever's edible, I hang it.

...we have a community hunt here and...I share with the elders in the community, you know, and I was given a moose last fall by Fish and Game, and I just got one, you know so, I went around and distributed to the elders and everybody.

I guess my concern with the community as far as hunting is to make sure that we have the numbers with the herds to be able to satisfy the community because all the families will share amongst each other

Subtheme: Sharing of Knowledge

One participant in the community was an avid dog musher and spent much of her time taking out other young women and teaching them how to mush. She felt that by giving her time to the younger generation, they would be encouraged and grow through hard work and connection to the outdoors. The participant helped one girl in particular to train and use her personal dogs for local racing opportunities.

She ran our dogs 3 years in the Junior Iditarod, and then she first, probably the first time she mushed dogs with me she was probably 12. And you know the first year we just tooled around there was nothing serious, and then as she got older, well you can run the Junior Iditarod at 14, and so we offered the opportunity if you wanted to take our dogs to the Junior Iditarod.

Younger girls that have their own dogs that are, you know, kind of encouraging them, and they have run with me, well [this girl] actually participated last year when we went out on a camping trip and the year before did a camping trip with the girls and their parents, that was their first time ever doing a trip out with their dogs.

Being dependent on family was key, but for one individual having the community involved was also detrimental to handling rough seasons of life.

It makes you an independent individual. There are times I think when maybe I'm fairly hardcore. But I've survived. But there are many times I've survived because of my kids. And this way of life, sometimes you have to be dependent upon other people and that includes the people in the community.

Sharing knowledge of gun use and hunting practices with others in the community was mentioned as a strong theme throughout the Cantwell interviews. One individual expressed his openness in regards to teaching others in the community about hunting, while another reminisced about the teachings he received as a child.

Just firearms in general are fascinating. You know, from the early Chinamen on up to the to the modern day stuff, and I enjoy hand loading, working up a load with a rifle or a pistol. I can shoot well. But, and turn, you know, being able to do well with one. It is like anything. It takes some practice, and I've always enjoyed doing that. I would ever since I was a little kid if I could get a hold of one, and

there in Benedict really shined on that because that is well, he was old enough he could have been my father.

Say I've seen kids that should've grown up here, but they take off somewhere else and now they're coming back, ahh, I want to learn this I want to learn that. I said just what I want is somebody else to teach that already knows, you know. Why didn't you just hang around and let your dad teach ya? But I'll teach them if they want, but I find out is most of them after one, and I tell them that, you are not going to learn what I know in one lesson.

I'll teach anybody what I know as long as they're willing, you know, and they all know that. I want to go, I say, get in the truck come on.

Subtheme: Like-Minded

The connected nature of the Cantwell community was spoken of often by participants. Friendship and like-mindedness were common themes. Individuals reminisced about their connections to the old-timers and the like-minded philosophies that they held in common. One individual who had spent her childhood in Cantwell greatly valued several of the older Cantwell residents who she referred to as the “old-timers” of the community.

By now I've been in Cantwell long enough, and I was here before, long enough that especially the old timers remember me and, and we with the old timers we have, you know, we have this shared history. And so therefore we have a relationship, and so we look out after each other. We're always concerned. The great thing about a small town is, boy, people really come right on out and help each other when the time is needed, you know. Anybody going through something around here, the community's there.

Cantwell is in my blood. I mean I love Cantwell. I've come to where I do not love a lot of people that live here. It is kind of like one Native man told me, he says I know all the people I want to know. In other words the ones he didn't know in this community he didn't care to know. And I thought that is good, that is good, I like that. I know all the people I want to know.

I love my spot. And I love the mountains. And the people for the most part, I mean they're only about maybe four people that I even go to visit anymore. And they're the older people that I knew all my life. And so I always go back to visit

them in Cantwell who's been here any length of time just becomes part of the town's probably character list or something. I may now be thought of as an elder. I like that, you know. That is kind of cool, you know, everybody knows me and a lot of people that I really haven't officially met and know their names know me.

This participant went on to explain in more detail the affinity she had for the older generation of Cantwell residents. She felt close to community members who held her similar cultural and social values.

Some of the new ones you know I mean I've taken them bakery items or something or invited them out to dinner just because I knew they were lonesome or something, but they do not have the same philosophy...we do not really have anything in common.

They make fun of the people here. And some of it is warranted. Seriously, I mean they brought it on themselves, but it is not the old timers. It is not the people I know. It is not the Natives. Maybe some of the younger Natives I mean they have a sense of entitlement. But it is not the older ones that I know that I grew up with. And those are the ones that are close to my heart. You know some of them have such a good sense of humor.

Those are the people that hold my heart. Because they're the old ones. And they believe in the old ways. And they're more down to earth in their thinking. They're not so radical about everything.

Other participants also mentioned the positive nature of the community, the like-mindedness that drew the people together.

The first time I came to Cantwell was in 93, and I was on a hunt, a sheep hunt, and by horseback, and I totally fell in love with this place...both the beauty of it, the physical beauty of it, and the people just intrigued me. I just felt, you know a connection with them somehow even though I was very different than they...I just [had an] attraction for the type of people.

When I went off to college I went to Central Washington State, and that is one that the guys liked about me was that they said, you are so real. You are not all painted up. You do not put on airs. You are not trying impress anybody.

I feel that people with a farm background tend to be work motivated. They want to produce. And like I cannot just sit all day and read or something like that. But if I make a quilt that is going to be given to an organization, I can work all day on the quilt. That makes me happy. You produce something.

There is not a strutting. Not a lot of strife for anything. There is a lot of cooperation when it is necessary. But people kind of keep their distance too. But down there most people think anyone that would live here is weird.

I was never treated any different around the Native people and, you know, I never treated them any different, you know. We just grew up. Ran around together. One of my best friends who ended up becoming the head colonel for the Alaska Department of Wildlife Protection grew up right here. Me and him have been buddies since we were kids, you know. And yeah, I'm indifferent you know... to me there is no line. I think my parents might have ingrained that in my head not to, you know, not to have a line you know. And I never gave it much thought. People are people. Didn't have any animosity at all or nothing like that.

Those days were more fun because it seemed like, you know, people created their own fun, you know, and somebody would get a wild hair and think of some goofy thing to do and then pretty soon you've got, you know 40, 50 people, you know, in on it. And that was when it was, when it was really a lot of fun.

One individual mentioned the long-standing history of the close-knit community and the bonds that had helped to draw families together during the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) era of the 1940s and 1950s.

The FAA stations, those families were very close. It was like we were one big family because we were in the middle of nowhere and we depended on each other. And I've always loved a small settlement of people, small community where everybody knows everybody and um, you know, you would be there. You could knock on any door and ask for help and expect to get it. I like that. And it is not that everybody gets along marvelously every single day of the week, but sometimes there is little feuds and whatnot. But if anybody involved in that feud got hurt or something, boy, everybody would be there. That is just how it is. I think that is kind of the Alaska way, you know. You just kind of put all feelings aside and, you know, you just do this. You look out after each other.

One individual had worked as a pilot for many years out of Cantwell, guiding hunters and transporting individuals when needed. The enjoyment he received from their friendship was mentioned as being one of the more meaningful elements of his work.

Well like today, I flew the airplane, I went by a bunch of different animals. The guys were really happy and excited and had a good time. That relates back to a good time for me. You know, but one of the guys that is coming moose hunting with me is a guy I really like. I look forward to seeing him. It isn't, shit I gotta do that, I'll just be glad when he's here, you know. And we'll enjoy each other when

he's here, so.

My life is mostly the people that I take hunting and fishing. Now I do not shoot anything. But now, papers, you know, I kill a lot of cardboard and, you know, clay pigeons, I like doing that. But I do not shoot much besides that...my life was way more the people that come, you know, the animals. I still enjoy being out there. But is kind of the big thing for me.

People are the most interesting animal out there. But varied backgrounds, what they do, where they came from, what their goals are, what they want to do. But yeah I'd say it is, it is more the people now than anything else.

The type of rural community and the elements of respect and low-stress were valued by several participants.

Well, I know why it is that way. You know, and it is not anything that you know I'm going to beat him up over or anything like that or you know talk bad about him or anything, but it is just like, it is a close knit community, and I like that.

...it's more laid back here. It people seem to kind of take care of each other more. You know, I mean because they, they know more about you, you know, where you kind of what, you know, what, what your history is, what you've gone through. So if you have a situation that, this is kind of weird to say, but if you do not, like if you do not want to talk about it or you do not want to deal with or anything, they kind of have an idea of why you're, you know, the way you are, you know, because we have, you know, some people in town that they're very quiet or like you said, standoffish.

Because you are out in the woods and nobody around, it is like pretty boring, you know. So I was like, I got to stay in town, you know. I did not travel. I would not be bored. I would always figure out things to do, you know. Since I started traveling and coming back like, yeah, I do not see...things the same; it is different.

The safe nature of living in a small community of close relationships was mentioned in contrast to living in a larger, more urban environment.

I mean they, so much, crime, and everything happens in the big city, well maybe people are just grouchier or something like that, you know, or they need to get out of there. Go do something else. That lifestyle make anybody grouchy. Wall to wall people...

How would you describe no stress? I mean, less stressful or tranquility? Is that kind of, I do not even know if that describes it. It is a safe place to, to raise a

family, you know.

They're pretty close. But I have enjoyed having people in the subdivision and not being totally by myself out there because again, that way of community, if you have a problem you could run to your nearest neighbor and expect help. And to feel safe and secure long term... like I said, to be able to go out for 2, 3 days, yeah, I could handle that. But long term living, I want to have neighbors.

Like living in the city and everything that when I was outside that was one thing that, that was hard for me to get used to was taking my keys out of the truck. But if you do not do that, that sucker isn't going to be there when you get back. But here I cannot think of time that we've ever had a stolen car. I mean we've had like I told you in the bar we've had some gas stolen and ridiculous little stuff like that but not really a crime wave.

A strong loss of community was mentioned by participants due to the changes having taken place in the recent decades.

Whatever happened to, going out and doing, doing something outside, you know, if you are bored, go find something to do outside, you know. But they'll, it seems like everybody just sits inside and you do not see the community coming together like they used to...but it is just gone so downhill... I mean it is almost like this town is dying.

I mean we've had people that for years you could leave your doors open, but now you cannot so much because you do not know if somebody knowing that you've gone is going to steal something even though they live here. You just do not know anymore. And so things change. I know they change all over. I mean I know other communities in the lower 48 said the same thing that you could leave your doors open, and you cannot anymore, but I just hate to see that come to Cantwell because I just love Cantwell.

A lot of them work for the state, and then that is the only reason that they're here, so. Like the railroad. And the state crew. Some of these guys do not live here. They just drive here to work here and then they go back to where, you know, some of them work in Healy...

Like the state troopers they do not live here either...it is supposed to be for Cantwell people that is been here and plan to live here. Not come here to live here for a year and a half or 1 year and find out it is too cold here. I'm putting in for another position in the Kenai.

Do not claim that you live here year round. Because I can take pictures of your house with all the plywood boarded up windows, and at times I felt like sending that to Fish and Game and saying here's your supposedly year round resident

there. Where is he? This is February, where is he? You know, so he's here for the hunting season.

Several participants shared their worries regarding the lackadaisical and goalless natures of the present generation. The lack of moral values and direction both worried and saddened several of the participants

...And they're living for today. I mean I have to have a 401k. I need to have insurance. I need to make sure the house, I want a nice house, and I mean I want a retirement. And these kids are just living for, you know, smoking pot. And not that we didn't do that, somewhat, growing up in our college days or twenties or whatever, but we never really lost sight of the fact that you had to be doing something with your life.

But it is, can get very discouraging here. And you see how it you just watch these young kids make one bad decision after another. And with no real regard to, not that they do not have any sense of right and wrong necessarily, but our, the world's definition of what is right and what is wrong is so different than the biblical view, and so if you are not exposed or taught the biblical viewpoint, then what is right and wrong and what's acceptable and, you know, what's cool and what's, you know, all that is a whole different ball game, and it is just killing these kids. I mean it is just destroying them.

It is like I, the trapping thing you know, like around here there is not hardly anybody trapping around here anymore, and there is no younger generation that is doing it that I know of. You know there is just not.

I think it is the role models, and the role model is the, the kids that have good parents, are pretty lucky, like the Leah Boys, I would have them over here working. And I would have [the neighbor's son]over here working. But there is very few of the other kids that I would trust...

Summary of Cantwell

Connections to nature and place was a strong theme amongst Cantwell residents. Individuals spoke of living with the land as part of a rural lifestyle that involved harvesting food and exhibiting LEK of the area. Knowledge also included knowing how to harvest and prepare game in a nonwasteful manner. Negative comments were made in

regard to overhunting and valuing wildlife was strong. Enjoying nature, particularly the mountains and caribou, was often mentioned. Non-Native participants mentioned having similar values as to their Native counterparts. Having a historical connection to Cantwell was strong, either through growing up in the community as children or having come from a similar environment to Cantwell later in life. Lastly, nature/place connections also focused on the changes to Cantwell through the building of the Parks Highway and an increase of regulations as having a negative impact on the original makeup of the community. Technology was another theme that was viewed negatively. Participants saw television and video games as disconnecting the youth from one another as well as the community. Solitude was a theme also mentioned as not only being a part of Cantwell culture, but as attracting a specific type of individual who valued solitude. Individuals mentioned solitude as having a refreshing element to their lives. Childhood connections to the outdoors and learning from elders was a strong theme. Individuals either grew up in Cantwell, near Cantwell, or in an environment similar to subsistence (such as rural farming) as a child. Connections to the outdoors and to living off the land was a strong part of participants' childhoods that carried on into adulthood. Conserving resources was a strong theme. Living a lifestyle of simplicity was valued, as was the proper care of game meat. Hunting for sport was seen as wasteful and game were seen as needing additional protection due to possible overhunting in the area. Having a dependence on local resources, particularly meat, was a strong theme. Additionally, having appropriate hunting skills and the survival knowledge was an important value. Finances was another theme. Subsistence was seen as a way to supplement ones' income as well as to negate the high costs of store purchased meat. Individuals lamented the increased costs of

accessing berries and other resources in the area. Freedom was a strong theme as well. Having policy restrictions enacted by local state and federal agencies, as well as Ahtna tribal corporations, was extremely frustrating for participants. However, individuals mentioned the freedom they were able to experience by living in Cantwell, particularly in choosing one's own occupation and having the freedom to access the outdoors whenever one wanted. Family themes involved sharing in activities with family in the outdoors, particularly with hunting and other outdoor activities. Health was a smaller, yet very real theme pertaining to the negative effects of beef on the health of participants and the need for healthier subsistence moose and caribou harvests. Local plant and berry harvests were also mentioned. Lastly, community was valued for sharing of resources, either as knowledge or food (again, moose was the strongest resource) as well as having a like-minded culture. Safety was also important in Cantwell. Individuals often mentioned not needing to lock their doors in contrast to Lower 48 communities that were deemed unsafe.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The focus of this study was to develop a broader and more thorough understanding of how identity is constructed by individuals partaking in subsistence activities in communities surrounding Denali National Park and Preserve. Individuals living in rural communities are often more dependent on local natural resources to supplement the seasonal and sparse employment opportunities in their communities (Huskey, 1992). Understanding the way in which individuals construct their identities around these activities provides readers with a broader understanding of the complex connections subsistence users with the natural world, their community, and attachment to place.

Various studies have focused either on the cultural, economic, and political aspect of subsistence living in rural communities (Huskey, 1992; Nelson et al., 1982; Norris, 2002) or on general concepts of identity and an individual's value orientation and attachment to the natural world (Manfredo, 2008; Opatow & Clayton, 2003), but no research regarding identity construction has been conducted on subsistence users living in rural Alaskan communities. Research has shown that an individual's value orientations greatly affect their relationships and understanding of both the social and natural world (Manfredo, 2008). Therefore, it can be assumed that the diverse histories, resources, and

people of Nikolai, Cantwell, and Lake Minchumina are highly reliant both on natural resources for economic reasons, but also for psychological reasons pertaining to ones' sense of self.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to increase both management's and academic understanding of how subsistence users living in rural Alaskan communities construct their identity in relation to their subsistence activities. The researcher also sought to explore participants' attachment to place, community, and the natural world and the values associated with these attachments.

Discussion

Each community interviewed was very unique in regard to population size, culture, and natural environment. Participants living in Nikolai consisted mainly of traditional Athabascan with deep historical and familial ties to the area and community. Nikolai was only accessible by plane, with local travel consisting of four-wheelers, boats, and snowmachines during the winter months. Participants were generally older, in their fifties and higher, and had lived primarily in Nikolai their whole lives. Three participants interviewed were in their mid- to late twenties and had spent several years moving back and forth from Nikolai to Anchorage either attending school, working, or living with family.

Similarly, many of the participants interviewed in Lake Minchumina were in their fifties or higher. This community was smaller in size, totaling 11 individuals at the time of the study. Individuals had either grown up in Lake Minchumina, other areas of Alaska, or had moved to Alaska in their twenties. Individuals in Lake Minchumina lived farther

apart in homes spread out along the lake. Participants were of a Western European background with independent mentalities. Individuals in the community were the most accustomed to visitors through the hosting of tourists, sport hunters, and other researchers throughout the year. Participants in Lake Minchumina were the most receptive and trusting of researchers and took great interest in contributing to this researcher's study.

In contrast, Cantwell was the largest community visited with a population of roughly 200 individuals. Participants were generally Western European with one participant having a mixed Native and Westernized heritage. Cantwell was also unique in that it was the community closest to the park and therefore had a higher degree of interaction with park management and policy. Participants interviewed were generally in their forties or older and had either been raised in the area, moved into the area at a young age from farming states, or had recently moved to the area for employment. Additionally, Cantwell was unique for being the only subsistence community based on a road system. Participants frequently mentioned the changes that had taken place in Cantwell over the past several decades through the building of the road, introduction of television, and the influx of visitors from around the state during hunting season. Changes to Cantwell as a cohesive community were mentioned, in addition to the lack of consistent employment available for future generations, who generally moved from the area once high school had been completed.

Human connections to nature was a strong theme within the data for all communities. Manfredo (2008) discussed the strong emotions associated with human connections to wildlife as being deeply important to certain individuals. Identity concepts relating to the data included a strong theme of human-wildlife connections that fostered a

stronger sense of self-in-relation. One participant mentioned that “I just have always had a love of animals. I hate to see anything suffer. I mean if you are going to kill it kill it outright. If you are going to eat it fine, but just do it in a humane way. Do not make it suffer.” Caribou were greatly respected, and in many ways admired by several of the participants, and individuals expressed deep emotion regarding the way in which caribou should be treated in the area. Feeling empathy for an animal in regards to the pain reveals a relational connection to the caribou.

Naess (1989) postulated that identification with the natural world gave individuals a sense of shared community. This identification with the natural processes was strong amongst participants who felt that while wildlife was there as a resource, particularly in regards to caribou hunting in Cantwell, the wildlife were also deserving of respect. Another participant from Lake Minchumina mentioned the connections they had with the natural world as if it were a social world that they were a part of.

But, subsistence, I do not think wildlife viewing is technically a part of subsistence, but it is certainly a strong part of our lifestyle. And even though we do not eat bald eagles and we do not do anything with the feathers or anything just seeing them, they are a part of our life. And flowers in the spring, I’m thinking mostly wild flowers, these are mostly domestic, but when the wild flowers come back, I know most of their names, but even when I do not know the name, it is like seeing an old friend, coming back to visit for the summer.

This participant felt a strong connection to not only the wildlife, but the plants that grew near their home. Sharing place and having the observed knowledge of both the eagles and the wild flowers created a sense of identification with the natural world. In this sense, participants expressed a sense of shared community with the natural world that they were a part of.

In regards to the strong theme of community connectedness, subsistence harvest

was found to be a form of connectedness to others through the maintenance of an individuals' self-esteem. Vignoles et al. (2006) theorized that individuals seek to maintain feelings of connectedness in a human social environment to define who they are in their specific social context. Vignoles et al. (2006) maintained that feelings associated with self-esteem were the strongest variables resulting in the human need for connectedness with others. Research data gathered from subsistence users were found to uphold Vignoles et al. (2006). The data were particularly significant in regards to sharing practices.

The guy down the road... I known him since I was in high school, but he called me for meat, and so I gave him quite a bit, and he was thankful. And then this summer he comes by, and he goes I never would have made it through the winter if you had not helped me out. Things like that, I appreciate that.

During this particular interview, the participant often mentioned his food sharing activities amongst the people of Cantwell through personal hunts as well as meat harvested from road kill moose that he butchered and gave to others in the community.

Food sharing was not only practiced among communities to uphold an individual's self-identification with the community, but was also an important part of traditional Athabascan values that brought a strong sense of satisfaction to the individual (Nelson et al., 1982). Participants in Nikolai often mentioned sharing meat and berries with family and friends, and in particular the elders of the community. Participants mentioned growing up in Nikolai and how when they were children, they were told to go to a relative's house to help with chores, such as cooking or chopping wood. In turn, those participants spoke of sending their own children to care for relatives like they had been when they were children. Sharing in resources, particularly food, was strong amongst all communities, but particularly in the Athabascan community of Nikolai. One participant

mentioned that “most of the time [I] give it to the elders. Elders first. That is how every village operates I guess. Elders first, they're the most respected.” Sharing was generally given to others out of respect, and individuals in the community who shared were given respect in return for their actions. Another individual mentioned that “You have a lot to eat, so you share it with your friends. Get them a little box something. It make them happy and you make more friends.” Sharing was seen not only as a strong Athabaskan value, but also as a way to cement relationships within the social context of a community environment.

In contrast, the theme of technology was an element of the data that was repeated that held particular connotation for removing one's connection to community, nature, and family. Connections to the social human and nonhuman environments were highly valued amongst participants who expressed their distaste for television, computers, and video games and the changes that they brought into the lives of both their own children or grandchildren, but also children within the community. One individual in Nikolai mentioned that

I [have] been working since I was 13 or 14. Kids nowadays they do not even know how to use a chainsaw. All they know how to do is play them games. Like Playstation and stuff like that. Listening to iPod. I mean when I go to their house, I tell them I'm here to visit you, I'm not here to visit your Playstation or iPod or you to be on computers.

Having a lack of knowledge of general skills, such as using a chainsaw, was seen as a degrading quality by the participant. Likewise, the social connectedness the participant was seeking with the children of the community was deeply important. As an Athabaskan value, community and social connections were very important.

The theme of solitude or quietness was mentioned often by participants,

particularly for participants living in Lake Minchumina. This theme was found to be consistent with individuals' attachment to place where solitude and quietness were highly valued. Individuals mentioned the value associated with quietness in their ability to connect with the natural world:

I really value the quietness here. I can hear everything. I could sit and listen. I love to listen. You know, I have ADD, but it is like I can hyper focus, and it is like and just listen to everything or wait to hear something. That is even exciting. I know I'm going to hear something really soon!

Having the ability to hear the sound of wind on raven feathers, or other forms of wildlife was mentioned, particularly by Lake Minchumina residents. Another individual mentioned the nature of surrounding Cantwell and the quiet life of the community that allowed for an increased connectedness to nature.

But there are some nights that, that, that when you get a good blanket of snow, and it is snowing pretty hard, it muffles everything to where you can stand on the porch, and you can literally hear the snow, you know, hitting the porch, just landing on the porch, and that is just something I always thought was really kind of cool...there is something real peaceful about it.

Individuals expressed a strong attachment to environments that offered solitude or quietness, which in turn allowed for a greater ability to connect with the world around them. Connecting to nature, such as having the ability to hear and see wildlife, was highly valued among participants.

Freedom was a particularly strong theme within the data in regard to having the ability to live apart from rules and regulations and being able to connect to nature. Deci and Ryan (2000) mention the need for autonomy, or the feeling that an individual has in knowing that they are acting on their own versus acting in accordance to the wishes of others. This is a basic aspect of an individual's identity that was repeated throughout the data. One individual mentioned that

I cannot imagine doing it for 30 years or 40 years to whatever to get a retirement from those people. I feel like I been fortunate to do this, you know, where most of the people when I was a kid, you were kind of destined to do something with forest products, commercial fishing, or farming. There was not much else there.

This particular individual continually mentioned how he had felt constantly pressured to pursue a career either as a factory worker or in the commercial harvest industry. This individual left home when he turned 18 and moved to Alaska where he learned to fly, eventually settling in Cantwell where he started his own guiding business. By leaving Oregon and settling in Alaska, this participant was able to find autonomy within the particular social environment of Cantwell.

Additionally, data revealed participants' connections to the natural environment that also allowed for feelings of autonomy within the broader theme of freedom. A theme particular to nature connections revealed an individual's enjoyment of place due to the ability for participants to connect with nature under their own volition.

Like on the rivers in a canoe, that is a sense of freedom... as you are canoeing along like the moose or the caribou, if they're standing by the edge of the river getting water or something like that, they do not pay any attention to you because they do not have any threat that comes from the water. I mean they'll just watch you go by, but they do not head for the brush...that is a sense of freedom.

It can also be assumed that individuals who felt competent in a specific environment are more prone to continue to interact with that specific environment. Additionally, their ability to relate to a nonhuman world is a strong component of SDT that also reveals an individual's pursuit of freedom as a value.

Dependence on local resources as a theme was also linked to autonomy in individuals. Deci and Ryan (2000) focused on an individual's need for autonomy as being a basic psychological motivator and therefore a highly important aspect of one's wellbeing. While being dependent on local resources may seem to lack autonomy,

participants mentioned their ability to survive and utilize local resources as a way of negating their dependence on outside sources, such as government or market economies. Having the ability to choose what resources to rely upon in regards to food sources and management of personal schedules was highly valued among individuals. While resource dependence was not always an aspect of choice, in many situations individuals were reliant on the resources due to a lack of any other in a rural setting. The deeper need for resource dependence was still very apparent in their need to feel autonomous.

The theme of connecting to nature had elements of spirituality for both Native and non-Native individuals (McGuire, 2009; Sefrit et al., 1998; Shultz et al., 2000). Nature had either spiritual components in itself, as was the case with Athabascan participants, or for non-Native participants who did mentioned spirituality, connecting to the natural environment was a conduit for connecting with God.

I mean to me a place of rest and refuge, kind of like we were created to live in a garden. We were, and so we have this continual longing to be next to nature, to be involved with it in some way.

It is just so nice and because, God, he made so many amazing things you just want to watch instead of hunting it.

Likewise, Athabascan spirituality was mentioned in connection to respect for the land and particular actions that communicated that respect. Wildlife, plants, and trees were seen as having a spiritual presence, and individuals related their connections to nature as having spiritual meanings.

When my mom used to cut wood, she'd pile all these limbs that she cut off and she'd pile them in one place...it is for respect for the trees, the spirit of the trees. You just didn't leave it scattered all over for you to walk on. So they believed everything had a spirit and they had to be, it was like being in some kind of church, I guess.

There was always this respect for the living, you know. We had power, some

kinds of powers, so if we were disrespectful to him, to get back at you in some way, in a bad way. So everything had a spirit is the way I was taught. Even fox. Even the trees.

A deep reverence and a respect for nature was relevant in the connections most Nikolai participants had with the natural world. Throughout the data for both Native and non-Native participants, nature had a spiritual importance as either a monotheistic or polytheistic belief system among individuals.

Economics was a strong theme among the data relating to costs associated with living in rural communities as well as the lack of consistent employment. Consistent within much of the research within Alaska, subsistence communities face a lack of steady income due to the rural nature of their geographic location (Wolfe, 1991). Individuals mentioned their diverse income, generally seasonal and short-term in nature, and the need for subsistence to supplement the high costs associated with purchasing store foods. Individuals found employment through construction, mining, and trapping. For both Lake Minchumina and Nikolai, food was brought in solely by cargo aboard planes, often resulting in products costing 3 to 5 times their original price. Individuals supplemented their food supplies by hunting moose and other game animals, by growing gardens for vegetables as well as picking various types of berries. In some situations, individuals mentioned how living in rural communities was less costly due to the lack of housing costs and taxes and therefore more palatable financially than living in an urban setting.

Living a no-waste lifestyle as a theme was found to be significant amongst all communities and was supported by the traditional connotations associated with living a Native lifestyle as well as that of a frontier ethos (Billington, 1967; Nelson et al, 1983). Native participants generally linked no waste to respect for game. This respect was

shown by the utilization of all parts of the moose, from the insides to the hooves, as food. During the researcher's visit, individuals shared stories of eating moose head and hoof soup. Respecting the land and wildlife meant not taking more than one needed and utilizing what one was given. In contrast, non-Native participants were highly oriented towards no-waste philosophies, but did not orient their concepts based upon Native tradition. Western frontier mentalities relate to concepts of innovation and adaptation in regard to economic advancement (Billington, 1967). Utilizing the land in such a way as to conserve resources is highly western in its philosophies. Participants often mentioned repurposing items, utilizing all parts of game animals, and not taking more than one needed for the purpose of having a continued supply of resources for the future. Having a no-waste philosophy was very important and in many ways existed as a core value amongst subsistence users.

Conclusion

The unique elements of Nikolai, Lake Minchumina, and Cantwell's people groups, ecosystems, and histories, provides us with a thorough look into the complexity of what it means to be a subsistence user in today's world. I have introduced traditional western culture of frontier and protestant work ethic as well as the traditional Native Athabascan ideals that has a deep impact on the values associated with connecting to family, community, and nature. I have looked at attachment to place and the connections individuals form with the natural environment at a young age that impacts their attachment to place as an adult. Of all the individuals interviewed during the project, only one had originated from an urban background. The significance of living close to the land

as a child has deep implications for where and in what way an individual chooses to conduct his or her life as an adult. I have also focused on the general value of subsistence as a method for individuals to complete their identity pursuits of freedom. The value placed in pursuing game, living simply, and living unburdened (as much as one can be unburdened in today's world) by federal, state, and private management was extremely important.

Specific values were stronger in certain communities than others. Cantwell's history of rapid growth in the 70s with the creation of the Parks Highway and the influx of outside hunters greatly changed the community's ability to harvest local resources. Participants often mentioned the tension they experienced living in close proximity to DENA in regards to increased interactions with management officials and policy that they interpreted as decreasing their ability to continue a subsistence lifestyle. Additionally, participants felt that the constantly changing community affected people's interactions as new mentalities of living conflicted with the "old ways" of thinking. Newcomers were viewed as not as likely to respect the land or others in the community. Additionally, Cantwell participants often lamented the decreasing number of local youth who moved to larger communities postgraduation. A lack of steady employment in the area was voiced as a cause for the decreasing population.

Likewise with Nikolai, changes brought on by the introduction of schools greatly changed the nomadic nature of the community. Families no longer moved seasonally from place to place in the pursuit of game, converting instead to a culture of women staying at home with the children while the men left for hunting camps. Additionally, the introduction of snowmachines changed the communities' reliance on fish harvests due to

the lack of need for dogs for mushing. Fish camp suddenly became a much less visited place, and for some not at all.

Also, the economic situations of rural communities were mentioned as deeply impacting the lives of participants. In Cantwell, employment opportunities were more prolific than in Lake Minchumina or Nikolai, but participants still mentioned the dichotomy of rural hunters and the economic values of hunters from larger cities such as Anchorage and Fairbanks. Nikolai and Lake Minchumina focused on the lack of employment in rural areas and the struggles facing younger generations who struggled with establishing themselves financially in the community. In general, Lake Minchumina residents mentioned the dwindling population of the community, the lack of newcomers, and the continual aging of the long-term residents. In general, subsistence was used to supplement income, as both a main food source of moose and as partial income through fur trapping. The costs associated with transporting foods to roadless communities often disrupted individual's abilities to utilize outside resources, resulting in a greater dependence on community sharing and local subsistence.

Additionally, high value was associated with having a no-waste culture. Participants took great pride in having the skill in living simply, not only through subsistence but in being able to utilize all parts of a harvested animal either for themselves or by sharing with others. Seeing hunters, generally from outside the community, waste portions of harvested game was saddening to many Native and non-Native participants. Subsistence was seen as a privilege that individuals had been given by being a member of the community. The everyday life of an individual focused on resourcefulness, and the culture of no-waste was a component of living a subsistence

lifestyle.

Subsistence living was linked to healthier living by several participants. In Nikolai one participant felt that the introduction of “white man food” had contributed to the rising obesity rates of the community, particularly children, and to his battle with diabetes. Individuals in Nikolai and Cantwell mentioned the fatty nature of store-purchased beef and how they were unable to eat the meat without feeling ill effects. Lake Minchumina residents were particularly connected to gardening activities and utilizing local mushrooms and wild plants not only for food but for medicinal purposes. The harvest of wild berries, including cranberries and blueberries, was one of the more meaningful and popular activities in regard to wild plant harvest.

Lastly, a deep respect and appreciation for nature was mentioned by participants from every community. I heard words like “love” and “amazing” to describe users interactions that not only included harvest, but with harvest being a tool to interact, and in some ways used as an excuse, to be outside in what some referred to as the “wilderness.” It was in the outdoors that individuals felt relaxed, rejuvenated, and connected to a part of a greater system or entity that increased their feelings of wholeness.

The values associated with living a subsistence lifestyle were detrimental to the well-being psychologically, emotionally, and physically of the participants. Having a sense of connectedness to the land also brought about a sense of kinship with others not only through the act of teaching, but by sharing within families and between friends. I have attempted to better untangle what it means to be a subsistence user in a federal recognized community and have instead reinforced the knowledge that people are complex and that the world, both human and nonhuman, are in constant flux.

Lastly, methods for data collection were modified throughout the study in regard to utilizing photo elicitation in a research setting. Prior to the interview, participants were asked if they were willing to participate in the photo elicitation process. While some participants expressed interest, all requests were refused in every community aside from four individuals in Lake Minchumina. When participants expressed disinterest, generally due to lack of time, the researcher utilized stock photos and/or the use of exploratory questions. Due to the lack of time available during the busy summer months on part of the participants, photo elicitation was not feasible in this situation. Exploratory questions were well received by participants. In certain cases, such as Nikolai and Lake Minchumina, individuals were familiar with researchers and their mode of gathering data through interviews. Additionally, sitting and asking questions about living life in rural Alaska and listening to stories is a common practice within communities and therefore a more familiar mode of communication.

Additional recommendations would be to conduct a pilot study within the communities prior to the launch of the main project. This will not only aid in building stronger relationships with the community, but will also pinpoint individuals willing to participate and better prepare and familiarize the community with the study beforehand. In general, individuals living within rural Alaskan communities are closely connected and dependent on one another. Fostering and building relationships beforehand will greatly increase trust between the researcher and the participant. Incorporating longer stays within the communities are helpful to better integrate the researcher and build relationships. Visitation that lasts 2 or more weeks is recommended.

While all the communities studied were categorized as subsistence communities,

each community was unique culturally, environmentally, geographically, historically, and socially. It is recommended that researchers be prepared to modify their method of data collection in a way that best fits a specific community. For this research, cultural differences between Western and Native Athabaskan traditions were highly impactful in regards to understanding value systems. Language barriers were also faced amongst older Native Athabascans where English was spoken as a second language. Population sizes of communities, such as the difference between communicating with a community of 11 people versus 200, were also a factor to take into consideration in regard to length of time one should spend in a community and the feasibility of accessing subcultures within the community. For example, while Cantwell was a mix of individuals from both a Western and Native background, only individuals from a Western background were interviewed due to time constraints. Lastly, building trust prior to the research would greatly improve not only communication with individuals within the communities, but help to alleviate the mistrust that is often encountered between subsistence users and individuals associated with federal management. Due to issues involving a lack of interest in participation during the first site visit to Nikolai, gift baskets of \$50 in food were prepared and given to every participant in every community as compensation for individuals who participated in the project. This helped to elicit participation from individuals within the communities as well as provide a form of compensation for time spent speaking with the researcher that often extended an hour or more. Future recommendations include issuing monetary payment as a form of eliciting interest as well as providing a way to give back to rural communities where employment is scarce and not always available to everyone.

The utilization of key informants was incredibly helpful during the elicitation and interview process. Utilizing contacts made within the community were invaluable in regard to gaining knowledge on the main hunters/gathers in the community and old-timers, as well as meeting and gaining trust from others. In several situations, key informants pulled the researcher aside to introduce her to community members, went door to door with her, and offered to drive the researcher to the homes of individuals. In all cases, key informants helped to elicit trust, provide advice, and pinpoint individuals who would be more receptive to participation in the research project. Key informants not only provided insight into community knowledge, but assisted with helping the researcher better craft the interview questions based upon the knowledge gained regarding the community's history and unique individuals.

Communities in Alaska are diverse in their culture, natural environment, and history as well as level of resource dependence and type. Therefore, individuals living in Alaska express a multifaceted level of resource dependence that is complex on a cultural and economic level. Resource managers from both state and federal institutions manage the resources that hunters seek and are therefore responsible for creating webs of communication with these specific stakeholders. Understanding the needs of hunters, why these activities are important, and how they may have changed over the years will help inform state and federal policy managers. Future research will also benefit from this complex topic of subsistence and an individual's reliance on said activities. My hope is that this information can be used by policy managers to better understand the local communities and their needs and that a stronger bond can be made between the public and policy makers. It can only be assumed that resources will become more difficult to

find with the natural changes taking places as well as the increased pressure from outside sources. It is also my hope that people who have chosen to live with such deep ties to the land will continue to do so for many generations to come.

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